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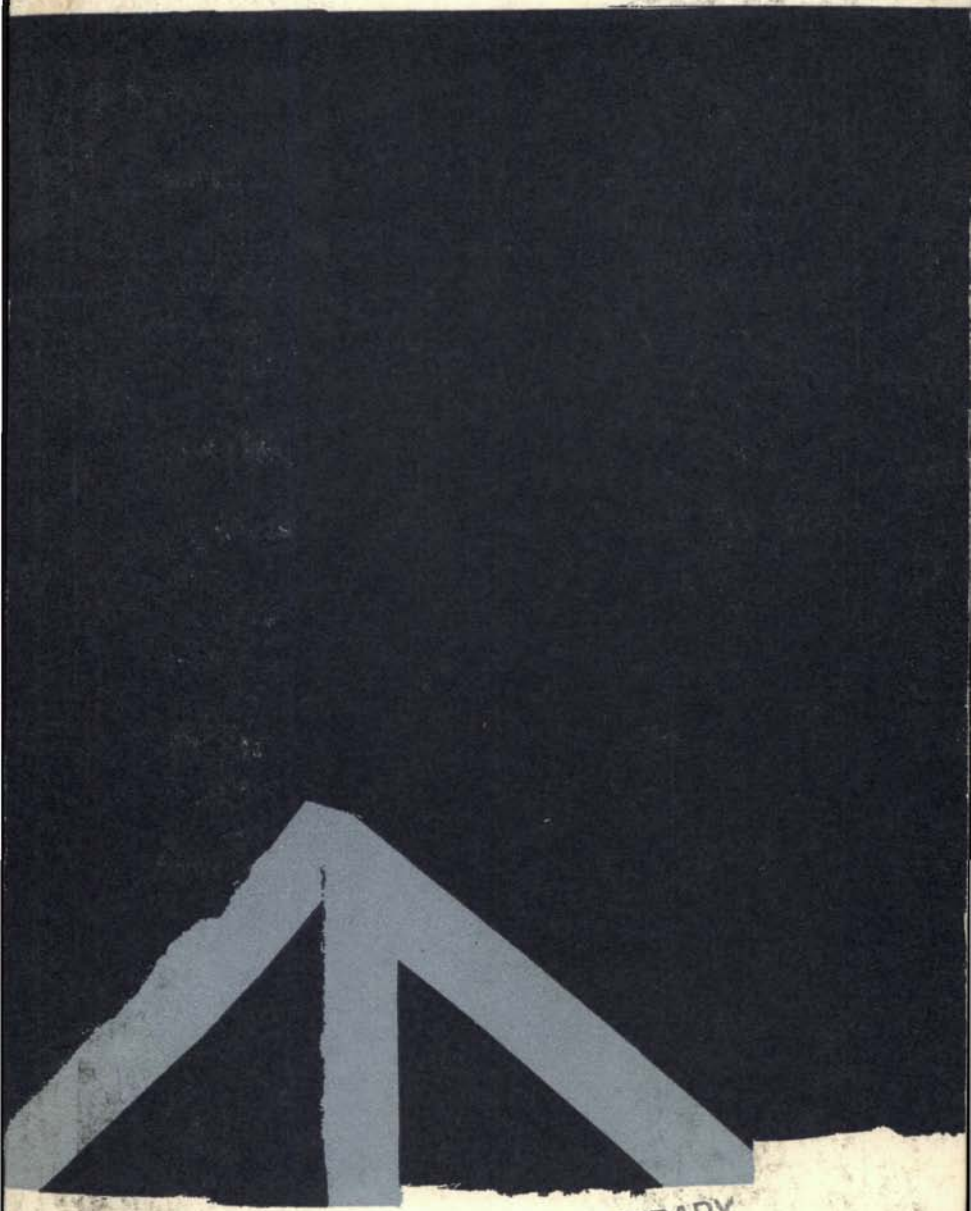

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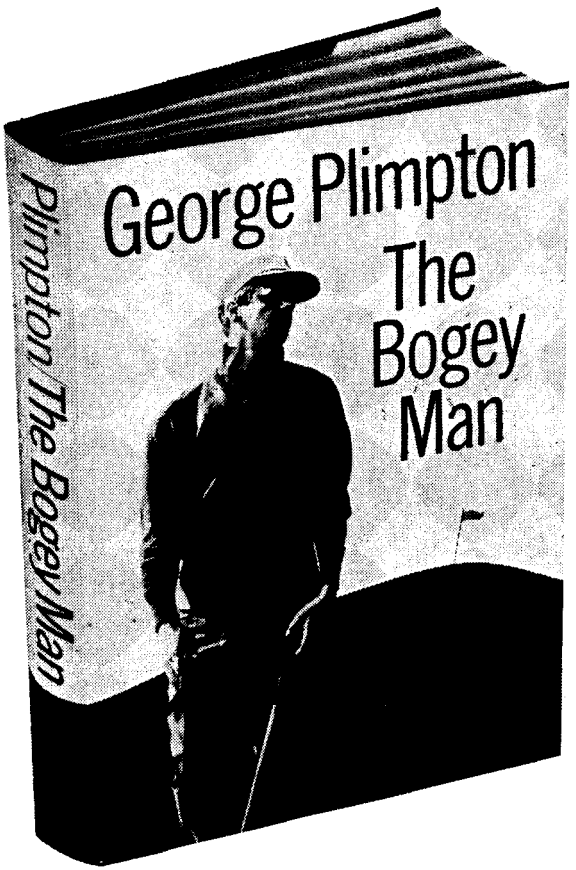

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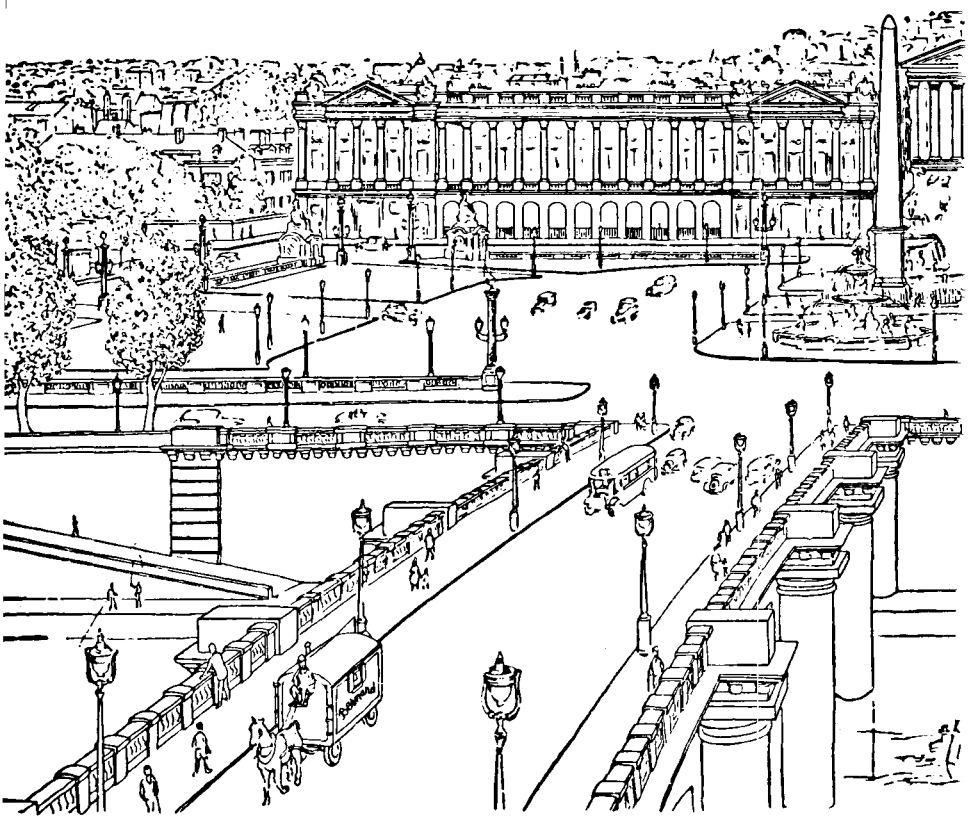

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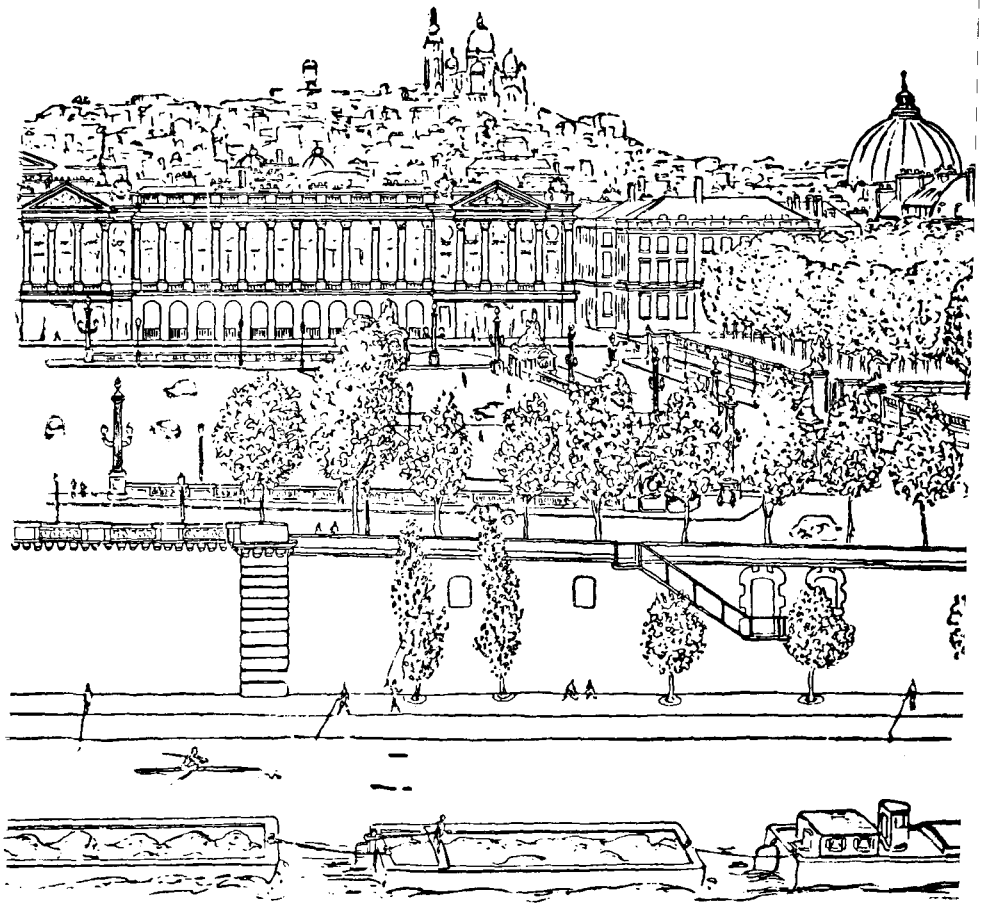

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Nine Poems by Frank O'Hara

Poem

When your left arm twitches
it's like sunlight on sugar
to me and my tongue seeks
the sea of your skin, its oily
calm of green light on the floor
of the ocean
as in parting,
there's a flutter between us
while I haul down a flag and
you look absently out of
my heart so you won't see
what light one fears in the
sea that I don't want you
to know is of you in me

1953

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On Rachmaninoff's Birthday

I am so glad that Larry Rivers made a
statue of me

and now I hear that my penis is on all
the statues of all the young sculptors who've
seen it

instead of the Picasso no-penis shep-
herd and its influence—for presence is
better than absence, if you love excess.

Oh now it is that all this music tumbles
round me which was once considered muddy

and today surrounds the ambiguity of
our tables and our typewriter paper, more
nostalgic than a disease,

soft as one's character, melancholy as
one's attractiveness,

offering this pernicious advice of dreams.
Is it too late for this?

I am what people make of me—if they
can and what they will. My difficulty is
readily played—like a rhapsody, or a fresh
house.

1954

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Pearl Harbor

I belong here. I was born
here. The palms sift their fingers
and the men shove by in shirts,
shaving in underwear shorts.
They curse and scratch the wet hair
in their armpits, and spit. Whores
spread their delicate little germs
or, indifferently, don't, smiling.
The waves wash in, warm and salty,
leaving your eyebrows white and
the edge of your cheekbone. Your ear
aches. You are lonely. On the
underside of a satin leaf, hot
with shade, a scorpion sleeps. And
one Sunday I will be shot brushing
my teeth. I am a native of this island.

1955

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To John Wieners

You walk into a theatre in the semi-dark
a tiny stage holding up a candle
a few actors are pacing from shadow to shadow
mouthing some misty emblematic rhetoric
about incest and a garden that has telescopes

But you hear something and look
a stout lady in furs is pouting over
a script and the director
is fondling his braces' purple
the prop man is commiserating with a girlfriend on the telephone
and a character actor is explaining the ticket tax
to a voluptuary usherette who's bleached
the producer has his feet up on the row in front
it's none of these, is it? ticking away
the lead is patting her hair and picking her teeth
and a pale young man in a muffler sits erect in the last row

Whose heart is beating in this shell? the pulse
of poetry, although the sound girl's at a funeral

And one day weeks later the muffler grey and old
for one so young unwraps its sheaf of poems
heard already among the sets under the worklight
a voice is heard though everyone was mumbling
now so silent that the dark is all blown up

She has exposed her bosom in its late disguise
under a muffler, it could be St. Petersburg or Cambridge
and the snow and theatre, like Philip Sparrow, nestle there

1956

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Lisztiana, Much Later

I sit in your T shirt
with its spots of paint
as a certain fierceness pours
outside, perhaps, too, on you.

I'm smoking a CAMEL now
and I have a big hole in my
shoulder from washing away
a lot of dirt. Are you there?

there, are you? I am here
and the storm is not enough,
it should crash in and wet,
there should be maelstrom where

a privileged host is smiling.
And naked in debris I there
should be, but, being here, should
bend to you, pick out of rubble

a scrap of painted shirt,
as if it were soiled ivory from
a grand piano, possessed of us
both, and ruined now by storms.

1956

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With Barbara Guest in Paris

Oh Barbara! do you think
they'll ever name anything after us like
rue Henri-Barbusse or
canard à l'ouragan?

have infected a pale white
moonish bateau-frigidaire
with our melancholy lights
and vaguely proud dissemblings?

care for the lap of Mallarmé
and the place where heroes fell down
is right in our Pushkinesque enclosure
as greatness sleeps outside
smiles and bears
the purple city air

1958

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Poem

The fluorescent tubing burns like a bobby-soxer's ankles
the white paint the green leaves in an old champagne bottle
and the formica shelves going up in the office
and the formica desk-tops over the white floor
what kind of an office is this anyway
I am so nervous about my life the little of it I can get ahold of
so I call up Kenneth in Southampton and presto
he is leaning on the shelf in the kitchen three hours away
while Janice is drying her hair which has prevented her from hearing
my voice through the telephone company ear-blacker
why black a clean ear
Kenneth you are really the backbone of a tremendous poetry nervous system
which keeps sending messages along the wireless luxuriance
of distraught experiences and hysterical desires so to keep things humming
and have nothing go off the trackless tracks
and once more you have balanced me precariously
on the wilderness wish
of wanting to be everything for everybody everywhere
as the vigor of Africa through the corridor
the sands of Sahara still tickle in my jockey shorts
the air-conditioner grunts like that Eskimo dad
and the phone clicks as your glasses bump the receiver
to say we are in America and it is all right not to be elsewhere

1959

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Three Poems

Dante

I could guide you into depravity but I'm not sure I could lead either of us back out.

Masturbation

It's a pause in the day's occupation that is known as the children's hour.

Telephone (to Patsy Southgate)

I sometimes wonder how we all get through this soap opera that is our life.

1961

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A True Account of Talking to the Sun at Fire Island

The Sun woke me this morning loud
and clear, saying "Hey! I've been
trying to wake you up for fifteen
minutes. Don't be so rude, you are
only the second poet I've ever chosen
to speak to personally
                so why
aren't you more attentive? If I could
burn you through the window I would
to wake you up. I can't hang around
here all day."
                "Sorry, Sun, I stayed
up late last night talking to Hal."

"When I woke up Mayakovsky he was
a lot more prompt" the Sun said
petulantly. "Most people are up
already waiting to see if I'm going
to put in an appearance."
                I tried
to apologize "I missed you yesterday."
"That's better" he said "I didn't
know you'd come out. You may be
wondering why I've come so close?"
"Yes" I said beginning to feel hot
wondering if maybe he wasn't burning me
anyway.
                "Frankly I wanted to tell you
I like your poetry. I see a lot
on my rounds and you're okay. You may
not be the greatest thing on earth, but

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you're different. Now, I've heard some
say you're crazy, they being excessively
calm themselves to my mind, and other
crazy poets think you're a boring
reactionary. Not me.
Just keep on
like I do and pay no attention. You'll
find that people always will complain
about the atmosphere, either too hot
or too cold too bright or too dark, days
too short or too long.
If you don't appear
at all one day they think you're lazy
or dead. Just keep right on, I like it.

And don't worry about your lineage
poetic or natural. The Sun shines on
the jungle, you know, on the tundra
the sea, the ghetto. Whatever you were
I knew it and saw you moving. I was waiting
for you to get to work.
And now that you
are making your own days, so to speak,
even if no one reads you but me
you won't be depressed. Not
everyone can look up, even at me. It
hurts their eyes."
"Oh Sun, I'm so grateful to you!"

"Thanks and remember I'm watching. It's
easier for me to speak to you out
here. I don't have to slide down
between buildings to get your ear.
I know you love Manhattan, but
you ought to look up more often.
And
always embrace things, people earth
sky stars, as I do, freely and with

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the appropriate sense of space. That
is your inclination, known in the heavens
and you should follow it to hell, if
necessary, which I doubt.
Maybe we'll
speak again in Africa, of which I too
am especially fond. Go back to sleep now
Frank, and I may leave a tiny poem
in that brain of yours as a farewell."

"Sun, don't go!" I was awake
at last. "No, go I must, they're calling
me."
"Who are they?"
Rising he said "Some
day you'll know. They're calling to you
too." Darkly he rose, and then I slept.

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Jefferson's Beauty

Joy Williams

The flags of the boats in the bay whipped in the wind and the gulls wheeled for snapshots and the sound of bicycle bells fell through the leaves of the chestnut trees and down the cobbled streets, and, on warm afternoons, on the porch of her summer home, Mrs. Harlan Case would often be heard to say, "I would have sown them like beautiful flowers," for she had wanted many children. It was a resort town, rich and glossy, and the Case house had the dignity of age and wealthy tenants. It was a restored Colonial with elms and widow's walks, a tiny front yard bordering a brick sidewalk and masses of roses in the rear. There was a portrait of Winthrop in the hall and the rooms were stuffed with antiques and long mirrors guarded by eagles. Martinis chilled all day long. The driveway held a Mercedes, and, when the husband drove down from the city for the weekend, a new Porsche. A brace of Yorkshire terriers lolled on the grass. The Case's had surrounded themselves with taste and various forms of beauty, the most precious being their only child, their son, Jefferson.

He was a beautiful child. With impeccable manners. Tucked demurely into rattan, one slender finger constantly circling the rim of her glass, Mrs. Case would speak as much in pride as in sorrow, for her single creation was (all the neighbors agreed) perfect. The other pretty freckled children with slim bodies and damp hair, with white but slanting teeth, were common as grasses or bright air beside Jefferson who, in neat white shorts and small white tennis jersey, passed the crackers and made polite and precious conversation.

Upstairs in the bathroom of his father's house, on the morning of his birthday eve, on the last day that he would

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be five, Jefferson, beautiful solemn child, hair blond to the color of tinsel, eyes large and grey, small swim trunks bunched round his knees, peed into a jelly jar.

He pushed his trunks all the way to his ankles and stepped from them carefully. They lay there, two blue eyes, the green tile of the floor their pupils. He set the jar on the sink and clambered onto a chair where he admired himself in the mirror. The beautiful growth below his belly. Between his legs. White and perfect as a northern peach. He thought it was the finest thing he had ever seen, much finer than his father's which was raw and dark, surrounded with harsh hair. He patted it fondly. To an only child to whom everything is private, everything one's own, this was his most prized possession. He scrubbed his hands and face, combed his hair and brushed his teeth. He dipped his finger into the jar and sniffed.

His father used colognes and dusting powder. There was a splashy odor of lime and alcohol about him. His mother drenched herself with wide swaths of perfume which Jefferson did not care for. There was a curious texture to her lipstick which he also did not like, for when she kissed him, her lips fell greasily away from his cheek like a spoonful of cake batter. He did not like to be kissed by his mother. He did not like to be touched at all. His body would feel stained and uncomfortable—blurred like a watercolor, no longer entirely his own. He politely endured his mother's caresses although he did not understand them. She handled him as though he were one of the stuffed animals of his room even though he had never felt a desire to hug his own toys, not even as a baby. She had feared that he would chew them in his crib and she had taken away their eyes, snipped off the buttons, the goggling plastic from the clowns and bears and ponies—but he had shown little interest in toys or objects. Occasionally he would touch them very carefully, respecting their furred or shining faces. When he grew older, their eyes had been restored and they stared at Jefferson admiringly from the shelf. When he rearranged them, the buttons swiveled wildly in their sockets.

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"Jeffie," he said to the face in the mirror, "is going to do something special for you today." He smiled. The vision in the mirror smiled. He crooned at it, opened his mouth still wider and grinned. He thought again of the whale and of his own wonderful idea, pleased that something so eminently his own could be put to such good and fragrant use.

His father had told him about the whales, traveling in herds like cattle through the sea—about the boats a hundred years ago that had sailed from Nantucket and their own summer island. They walked together hand in hand along the shore, Jefferson blinking uneasily with the knowledge. He thought all fish to be ugly unnecessary things, especially the scup and blues which his father brought in from the bay and cleaned on the chopping board behind the house and which he, Jefferson, pushed around his plate at supper, in and out of the peas and white sauce. He thought Ahab a fool to lose his leg for casks of oil from a useless whale. Jefferson thought the whole operation to be unclean and he found the stories boring. As with his mother, however, he was polite and silent, nodding his lovely head, smiling kindly. While his father told him about spars and quadrants, squaring the yards and sounding, Jefferson slapped his feet against the sand and felt the sun beat through his shirt onto his shoulders. He never went out without some protection for his skin. His father would laugh at his grim caution.

"Jeffie," he once said, "sailors don't cover themselves up. They let the sun burn them the color of leather. Out on their boats they're dark as Indians."

Jefferson winced at the vision. "I don't care," he said, and then, later, stroking his shoulders, smooth, warm, the color of honey—"I'm not a sailor."

"No precious," his father had said. "You're a little boy. You're my beautiful son."

It was the ambergris that fascinated Jefferson. The sweetness in the bowels. The basis for all perfumes. He was appalled and then entranced. His father went on to other things—gunwales, harpoons, the black towering sea—Harlan Case being a devotee of the past and the islands, cheerful in the

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enormity of his information—but the child, while the white sun poured down onto his hair, thought only of the wonder of the body. He had a new respect for whales who were able to create from their own diseased and private parts exquisite fragrances. If such beasts could make something extraordinary, he could make something divine. Jefferson had walked along the beach, his arms folded across his chest, pleased with the dreams of his own possibilities. He was beautiful and capable of anything. His parents told him that he was beautiful—the mirror—the people he saw every day, those who spoke and those who did not, the last telling him how perfect he was with their own imperfections—with their moles, stray hairs and swellings, with their pimples, bad teeth, pale lips and large noses. Everything reflected Jefferson's beauty. He was confident. He spoke softly to himself—his only friend.

In the bathroom on the day before he was six, he dipped his fingers into the jar of his urine and slid them through his hair, repeating this until his head was damp. He took the comb and slicked his hair down neatly. He daubed himself on the forehead, behind his ears, on his chest and under his arms. He did this until the jar was empty. An amber drop slipped down his cheek and hovered on his chin. He swept it away, put his trunks on and trotted down the stairs.

Up the street roared the butterscotch Porsche, slipping from one gear into another with a sound tidy as ripping canvas. The pride of Harlan Case, it was a beautiful car, throbbing purely, gliding around corners, glinting in the sunlight like a shining coin. On the luxurious leather of the passenger seat, mingled with packages in candy-bright wrappings, lay a stack of cards and letters. The car swung into the driveway just as Jefferson was kissing his mother good-bye. She pulled her fork away from a soft-boiled egg as though she had wounded it.

"Darling," she said, "you smell funny."

Jefferson tugged away from her. "No, I couldn't," he said and picked up a sand pail and shovel from behind the door. A pirate straddled the sides of the bucket, guarding a chest

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of gold. The shovel was grey and jagged where the paint had worn off.

She placed her fork in the middle of the egg again. "It's probably something gone bad under the sink."

Harlan Case bounded into the kitchen followed by the two terriers who flung themselves against Jefferson's legs and started licking him. He pushed them away and looked at the presents in his father's arms. He couldn't think of a thing that he wanted for his birthday. His father grinned extravagantly, his teeth white as candles. "You can't see them yet," he said. "You'll have to wait until tomorrow." Jefferson nodded and turned the shovel around in the pail.

His mother's face was pink and vague. "You shouldn't tease him like that, Harlan. You can open them all now if you want to, sweetie," she said to Jefferson. "There'll be more tomorrow."

"Of course there'll be more," his father yelped indignantly. "He'll be unwrapping presents all day long!"

"That's all right," Jefferson said. "I think I'd rather wait."

Overcome with tenderness, Mrs. Case's face went soft as custard. Her jaw sagged into caricature. God love him, she mouthed to her husband.

"What aplomb," his father said. "What a patient little man!" He put the presents into the closet and handed Jefferson the stack of birthday cards. There was a shade of disappointment in his voice. "At least you can look at these."

Jefferson sat obediently at the kitchen table and opened each envelope with a knife. When he had opened all the envelopes, he systematically thumbed through the cards, looking up only once to glare at the dogs who were snuffling and panting on the floor. Under his gaze they closed their pink happy mouths slowly—their eyes puce and puzzled, their small white teeth protruding evenly beneath their whiskers. When Jefferson looked away, they resumed their ragged exuberant panting.

There were clowns and cowboys, a Ferris wheel of dimes. Happy days leaped at him from fans and coiled springs and one card had a mirror inside of dented foil. Jefferson's face

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against the aluminum spread out like oil on water, his eyes running into his mouth, his nose mottled, a lump of punched clay. He placed it with the envelopes. "That's a silly card," he said. "I think I'll go to the beach now."

His mother's voice drifted to him from the other room where she was propping the cards on the fireplace mantle. "You have so many friends, Jeffie. You're a very lucky little boy." And then, absently, to her husband, "You must wash the dogs today, Harlan. They look so darling after they've been washed and brushed."

Outside, Jefferson wandered around the Porsche, touching it with his small palm, rippling his fingers across the engine vents. His father had waxed it so often that the metal felt pure as smooth skin. There were no scratches anywhere. The daylight fell away from it in moons of brightness. Jefferson's face reflected wide and orange from the car, his eyes long as knives, his fluttering fingers broad and shiny as birds' wings. He opened his mouth and a pearl of spittle dropped onto the hood. He rubbed it in with his finger until there was a dull greasy spot the size of a half dollar on the finish. He looked towards the house and began walking towards the beach, his towel trailing along the ground.

The sea was high and green and starfish dangled in the shallows by the jetties and the children, their feet sunk into sand, played by the lip of water. They were very brown and the sun had singed the top of their dark hair so that it was the color of lemons. They had cut Chlorox bottles into scoops and were shoveling water at each other, and their laughter, shrill as terns screaming, followed Jefferson as he walked far away from them, up the beach. He settled himself in solitude by some pilings. The beach sped lumpily with hundreds of tiny prints towards the waves. A grapefruit turned from black to pink as the flies flew away. Jefferson looked at it and climbed over the pilings to the other side where he set down his sand bucket and spread out his towel.

The wind blew strongly against his face. He put his hand to his hair and found that it was dry. He could no longer smell himself and he rumpled his hair angrily and then

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rubbed his eyes. It was going to be his birthday and he had not accomplished anything. It was coming tomorrow and there was nothing that anyone could give him that would be as valuable as himself. Jefferson walked to the water and waded in until the tail of his shirt grew wet. He seldom went in above his knees. He did not like to get his face wet and he didn't like to swim. He sometimes enjoyed splashing the water on his arms and legs and drying himself in the sun. Then he would lick the salt off with his tongue. He enjoyed the taste of that. In the clear shallow water where the sand was very smooth and clean, he saw a thin wavering line ending in a small depression where a hermit crab had tucked himself. He reached down and picked up the faded and shell-encrusted whelk that it had adopted and brought it back to his towel. The crab had sucked itself so far backwards that the mollusk seemed empty. Jefferson set the shell down, its hollow facing him, and lay down himself very quietly and watched it. After a few moments the crab waved a grey and delicate claw in the air, then another, then two antennae and the slim and tragic eyestalks. It ducked back into the shell but reappeared almost immediately, this time extending and spreading its soft coiled body into an arch as it tossed the whelk forward on its back and began to make its way towards the sea. The crab crept about a foot before Jefferson scooped it up and put it close to him again. It disappeared soundlessly into its whirl of shell.

In his mind, the child saw pictures only of Jefferson. They galloped and grazed across his eyes—sweet pretty animals of self. They overcame all externals. The crab was very ugly and Jefferson was very handsome and the crab was very timid and Jefferson was afraid of nothing and no one at all, but Jefferson envied the crab's home and concealment and wished it for himself. In his father's house, he constantly had to depend upon objects which did not reflect him—the white porcelain and the soft bed, the ceiling and the fork. Even his clothes, clean and pressed in the drawers of his room, the small suits hanging, the shoes in boxes, were only momentarily his—then they were removed, his scent and form

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scrubbed from them, and replaced again in stacks and layers and rows. They were very expensive clothes, always new, never mended or soiled and Jefferson was proud of them. At the same time they seemed menacing to him. They could have belonged to anyone.

The crab crept away from the towel and Jefferson brought it back. There was a soft nicker of sand as it fled far inside its shell. Jefferson stretched and nuzzled his face against the soft gauze of hair on his arms. He wished that he had a home like the crab or like the conch whose form was his home, who spun out his surroundings with his life. He wished he was some marvelous creature that could dine upon itself—lunching on flesh that would return—pure and tasty mushroom self.

He turned on his back and humming and patting his face, he looked at the sky. He wished that he could provide all things for himself, but he knew that he could not. He knew that he would have to eat food and sleep in his father's house and allow his mother to bathe and dress him in clothes that could not be his own. Looking up at the sky, the clouds bounding huge as ships, he knew that he would have to suffer all these things. He stared solemnly upwards. Everything was very large and deep and he was possessor of it all. But not master... He was not even master of his own body which he was sure wandered away at night while he was asleep—performing odd and wonderful things, living a life of its own while he lay bereft under the sheets, dreaming and lost. Though he treated it well, though it was the only thing he loved, he did not feel as though it were faithful to him.

He closed his eyes and the blue of the sky followed behind his lids. It was not faithful to him because he was not careful enough with it. It did not serve him always because he did not protect it against the encroachment of other, bigger bodies. Some morning he would wake to find that it had not returned to him and he would never be able to go out into the world again. He would lie there uselessly—blank as air, a stain upon the sheets. Beauty would leave him then too—because he had not defended it. It would abandon him

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and enter other things which would be admired and blessed, and he, Jefferson, would be lost forever. He saw all objects, all his possessions as crafty and living things, plotting among themselves, making their own alliances. He saw them after beauty had deserted him—raging like soldiers, clamoring over his gone and wasted self.

He would have to be cautious. He would have to be strong. If he were kind to it, his loveliness, if he were always alert to danger and threat, it would stay forever and his body would remain with him because it would be useless to go elsewhere and all things would come to him, to Jefferson. He would be the most beautiful thing in the world and would absorb all other beauties and all things would obey him and nothing would be necessary but himself. If he were patient... if he were clever...

He leapt upwards and hurled the crab as far as he could. It turned through the air and hit the sand with a dull smack. By the time Jefferson had reached his home, the crab had gained the water, and eternal, returned, without memory or design, loosed a stream of gentle bubbles and settled beneath the sand.

Jefferson ate a frankfurt and a dish of lemon sherbet and then lay on his bed. The room was dim and cool and the wind from the sea moved the curtains back and forth. When his mother came to wake him two hours later, he had not yet gone to sleep. He took a bath. The soap formed grey and listless bubbles and the water grew cold. He dressed and played Authors with his father until the guests began to come.

There were always guests coming to the house. The walls seemed to exist only to enclose parties. They celebrated his birthday, his father arriving for the weekend, his mother's new dress with an excitement which Jefferson thought mad. They would sail through the house—tall tanned people—stroking his head and picking him up, feeding pecans to the dogs, leaving glasses and ashtrays on the floor and lawn. The child would sit on the stairs in his pajamas and watch the crabmeat salad disappear into mouths—the bright dresses and jackets sway through the smoke, the music and words hang-

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ing stark as balloons in the air. He would close one eye and peer through the bannister railings and watch the guests move in noisy colorful coffins of space.

That night they brought him presents—miniature bears carved from cryptomeria wood, books, a cranberry-colored jacket, a toy boat with intricate rigging and nylon sails. He stood on the lawn and accepted them all with great grace. They stayed outside until it grew dark—the chiffon of the women's skirts brushing past Jefferson's face, the men clustered admiringly around the new car. The terriers ricocheted through legs and around bushes like croquet balls. They were black and tan—the color of used pipe cleaners. When they approached Jefferson, he would clap his hands at them and they would fly away in another direction.

"Quite a piece of cake, eh Harlan," a man said from the driver's seat of the Porsche. He was fingering the wood-rimmed steering wheel, slipping the shift dryly through the gears.

Harlan Case squatted by the open door. "O-60 in seven seconds," he said. "Five speed, all syncro gearbox. Disc brakes." He smiled. "Finest piece of machinery I've ever owned."

"Ah like that lil' strip of teak thar," a woman with bright eyes and long wet lashes said. "Ah like the *appointments!*" She plunged her head inside and dropped a potato chip on the seat. She picked it up daintily, popped it into her mouth and licked her fingers. "Ah think thar elegant."

Harlan had slipped behind the wheel and turned on the ignition. The needles of the dials swung forward as he revved the engine to 5000 r.p.m. where it wailed like a long high note on a jazz saxophone. He dropped it to a gentle idle and it throbbed perfectly without dip or miss.

"Your daddy has a beautiful car there, Jefferson," one of the men said.

Jefferson smiled and stroked the fender.

"In a few years the girls are going to be crying in their diaries over you, Jefferson," the same man said.

It was growing dark. Harlan turned off the engine and

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helped Jefferson gather up his presents. The people began to go inside and mill about the buffet. Jefferson sat in a corner, eating an artichoke and dropping the leaves into a napkin in his lap. His mother kissed him and straightened his tie. Someone gave him a sip of whiskey and put a rosebud in the paws of one of the carved bears. He regarded the party with large calm eyes. Before long, his father came and picked him up and carried him upstairs. Jefferson allowed himself to be hugged, undressed and put to bed. Through the closed door of his room, he could still hear the sounds of the party.

When he woke, it was still dark and the house was very quiet. He knew that everyone had gone home and that his parents were asleep but he did not know if it was his birthday yet. He lay on the bed until he could make out the dim outlines of objects in his room, and then he got up and opened the door. Downstairs, the rooms smelled of smoke and creamed cheese. Jefferson picked up a cracker from a dish and ate it. He was not sleepy at all. He felt very old and wise and determined. He picked up a handful of crackers and nibbled them slowly. He thought of all the presents, the giddy dogs, the way his face spread in the shine of the car. He thought of all the foolish things that his mother praised and his father liked. He felt everything holding its breath, waiting for him to prove himself, and he felt the comfortable presence of his own body and knew that it had not yet deserted him.

He rubbed the salt of the crackers against his pajamas and walked through the kitchen to the outside. The sky was not so dark as his room had been, and the moon shone whitely upon his bare feet. The sand bucket lay where he had dropped it that afternoon—by the water spigot at the side of the house—and he picked it up now and righted it, ferocious painted pirate with an earring and sand upon his leggings, and he grasped the shovel, carefully, by its handle, because the edge of the scoop was rough and sharp, a blade of snagged metal. The night was very quiet and there was no wind. The house loomed tall and white and the Porsche rested sleekly in the driveway and the child hesitated between

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the two. He was beautiful. He was proud. He was Jefferson and in the world alone.

He walked over to the car and brushed the shovel lightly across the hood. The first tear in the coat of baked enamel rang through his fingertips. He pressed down harder on the blade and it ploughed crookedly forward with a soft and brittle hiss. He rubbed his finger over the ridge and turned the shovel over flat and swept it scrapingly down the length of the hood. He stood on the balls of his feet, a matador, and plunged the shovel down again and again upon the Porsche, scarring every part of the car that he could touch. He opened the door, climbed inside and closed the door again against discovery and the silence outside, and delicate, sincere—as though he were offering a blessing—he knelt on the seat and rapped each of the gauges until the glass shattered and the needles fell twisted. By the time that he had finished, the darkness had receded and his face was pale in the greyness before dawn.

He got out of the car and replaced the shovel in the sand bucket. It was still very quiet but there was a fine mist rising and he could hear the birds moving about in the bushes. He brushed the flakings of paint from his pajamas and went into the house and softly closed the door. There was a small cut on his finger. One of the terriers brushed drowsily against his leg and Jefferson reached down and touched the rough head and the dog craned upwards and licked his hand. The child stood bent, listening, and then picked up a stool and walked to the sink. He climbed onto the sideboard, adjusted the plug and began to run the water. The faucet opened with a rattle and Jefferson, scowling at it and shaking his fist, turned it down to a slender, almost silent stream. While the basin was filling, he coaxed the terrier up onto the stool and then grasped its front legs and pulled it into his lap. The dog, wriggling happily, pressed its cold nose against his neck and then wobbled uncertainly from the boy's lap and bent its head to lap the water. Jefferson slipped his hand beneath the collar and rubbed the dog's ears. It was necessary that he protect himself.

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John Giorno

Lucky Man

A fragment
A fragment
from a North
Vietnamese
from a North Vietnamese
mortar
round

I read
the news
today
I read
the news today
oh boy
oh boy

mortar round
hit
a marine
corporal
hit
a marine corporal
in the head

with three
heads
with three heads,
six hands
six hands,
and four
feet
and four feet
firmly

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postured
firmly postured;

in the head
one foggy
morning
recently
one foggy
morning recently

Such a change
in taping
Such a change in taping
is preceded
is preceded
by the continued
association

The wound
was serious
The wound was serious.

About
a lucky man
About a lucky man
who made
the grade
who made the grade

But the fog
normally
lifted
But the fog
normally lifted
about noon

by the continued association
of the old,
strong
of the old, strong,
natural
stimulus

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the right
(face)
the right (face)
being white
being white,
the left,
red
the left,
red,
the central
the central,
dark-brown
dark-brown;

about noon
and no one
was overly
concerned
and no one
was overly concerned
about getting in
a helicopter
about getting
in a helicopter
to take
the young marine

And though
the news
And though the news
was rather sad
was rather sad

to take
the young marine
to a hospital
to a hospital.

Well I just
had to laugh

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Well I just
had to laugh

The fog
didn't lift
The fog didn't lift.

natural stimulus
for a particular
reaction
for a particular reaction
and the new
concomitant one
and the new concomitant one.

the body
emitting
the body emitting
flames
of radiance
flames of radiance;

I saw
the photograph
I saw the photograph

All during
the afternoon
All during the afternoon,
30 mile-an-hour
winds
30 mile-an-hour winds
pushed
the fog
pushed the fog
from the Balong Valley

Thus the original
stimulus
Thus the original stimulus
seems to produce

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a longtime
effect

from the Balong Valley
to the east
to the east
and over the Khesanh base
and over the Khesanh
base

the nine
eyes
the nine eyes
widely
opened
widely opened,
in terrifying
gaze
in terrifying gaze;

He blew
his mind
He blew
his mind out
out in a car
in a car

As night
fell
As night fell,
they radioed
the battalion
doctor
they radioed
the battalion doctor
for advice
for advice.

seems to produce
a long time effect

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in all
those pathways
in all those pathways
which were carrying
which were carrying
a message

Heavy fog
Heavy fog
continued
throughout
continued throughout
the next day
the next day.

He hadn't
noticed
He hadn't noticed
that the lights
had changed
that the lights
had changed

The corporal
The corporal,
long
in a coma
long in a coma,
began
began
slipping slipping.

a message
at the time
of its occurrence
at the time
of its occurrence
or at least
in a large number
of them

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or at least
in a large number of them.

The supply
of glucose
The supply of glucose
being dripped
being dripped
into his arm
into his arm
began
running out
began running out.

the eyebrows
quivering
the eyebrows quivering
like lightning
like lightning;

Without it
Without it,
he would die
he would die.

A crowd
of people
A crowd of people
stood
and stared
stood and stared

Without
hospital help
Without hospital
help,
he would die
anyway
he would die anyway.

They'd seen

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his face
before
They'd seen
his face before

The fog
was still
thick
The fog
was still thick.

The insignificance
of the substitute
stimulus
The insignificance
of the substitute stimulus
indicates
that the modifying
effect

That night
That night,
the fog
began
breaking
the fog
began breaking.

indicates
that the modifying effect
of the original
stimulus
of the original stimulus
is widespread

A radio
operator
A radio operator
reported
excitedly

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reported excitedly:
"I can see
the stars
I can see the stars."

Nobody was
really sure
Nobody was really sure
If he was from
If he was from

the protruding
teeth
the protruding teeth
glistening
glistening
and set
over one another
and set over one another;

Flares
were dropped
Flares were dropped.

is widespread,
and is not
confined
and is not confined
to a few
special
pathways
to a few special
pathways.

Ground
flares
Ground flares
were touched off
were touched
off during
during the next hour

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the next hour.

I saw
a film
today
I saw
a film today
oh boy
oh boy

A machine
gun
A machine gun
was firing
was firing
at the helicopter
at the helicopter.

Thus we assume
that there may be
Thus we assume that
there may be
some kind
of general
message
some kind
of general message
released
by the original
message

"We've only
got enough
fuel
We've only got
enough fuel
for 10 more
minutes
for 10 more minutes,"
the pilot

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reported
at last
the pilot
reported at last.

the hair
of reddish-yellow
the hair
of reddish-yellow colour
colour,
standing
on end
standing on end,
and emitting
radiance
and emitting radiance;

Finally,
the helicopter
Finally,
the helicopter
began
a slow descent
began a slow descent
through wisps
of fog

A crowd
of people
A crowd of people
turned away
turned away

the heads
adorned
the heads adorned
with dried
(human)
skulls
with dried

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(human) skulls,
and the (symbols of the)
sun
and moon
and the (symbols of the)
sun and moon;

released
by the original message,
but that it is
active
but that it is active
only in those channels
only in those channels
which were carrying
a message

through wisps
of fog,
looking
for the landing
zone
looking
for the landing zone.

which were carrying
a message
at about
the time
at about the time
of the original
stimulus
of the original stimulus.

black
serpents
black serpents
and raw
(human)
heads

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and raw
(human) heads
forming
a garland
for the body
forming a garland
for the body;

But I just
had to look
But I just
had to look

An urgent
voice
An urgent voice
broke in
broke in
as the helicopter
neared
the critical
point

Having read
the book
Having read
the book

as the helicopter
neared the critical
point:
"Be advised
Be advised
the med evac
is now routine
the med evac
is now routine,
repeat
now routine
repeat now routine."

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The effect
of this action
The effect of this action
may perhaps
not be permanent

I'd love
to turn
you on
I'd love
to turn
you on

Thirty-eight
hours
Thirty-eight hours
after the shrapnel
had ripped
into his skull
after the shrapnel
had ripped into his skull,

may perhaps
not be permanent,
but it is
at least
fairly
long-lived
but it is at least
fairly long-lived.

the corporal
had died
the corporal
had died.

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Camden

Austin Wright

Stella wrote that she would take the train to Providence, and he should meet her there in the car. Already he was calculating how he should proceed. A false step would alarm her and throw her off, and he had too much to lose, with all the entanglements of family friend and trust. The obstacle course defined itself: 1. You must *find out* the potential in her. 2. You must *heat* the potential to make it kinetic. 3. You must *reveal* your own potential. 4. You must *time* the release of your kinetic so as not to scare off hers. 5. You must *disguise* the steps so that she will be unable to turn back. 6. You must *conceal* it all from your wife. He had to use limited time to the best advantage without putting her on the defensive. He had to make such advances that he could anticipate her reactions without her knowing that advances had been made.

Therefore he began at once, making full use of the two-hour drive from Providence. Nothing could be worse than to rush things. He moved cleverly. At the station he piled the luggage into the trunk, greeted the children (Uncle Will), put the three older ones in the back seat, while Stella sat in front with the two-year-old (Denny) in her lap. She was tired, glad to be in the car. His cleverness was to say nothing provocative during the whole two hours. Prove trust, for always there is an awkwardness when old friends meet again, even if it has only been a month or so. How was the trip? How's George. That's Taunton, Middleboro, Wareham, Buzzard's Bay. Not let her know the designs you have. It may not have been clever, but it was proud, thinking, a two-hour opportu-

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nity is what any vulgar mind would expect a man to exploit, and I'll be damned if I'll differ from my usual self on that account. It annoyed him to watch himself in the act of muffing this unprecedented chance, paralyzed and exasperated by the difficulty of it, the impossibility of finding a way to say something that would set her thinking and yet not scare her, and in the end he said nothing at all. Because at this point in the visit he did not think it was possible to win her and did not intend to try. The idea had scarcely even entered his head. Pride.

And for the first few days nothing went well at all. There were too many people, Julie and children, around, depriving him of opportunities for a word with Stella. Without a private word, without a whole lot of private words, how could he hope to get anywhere? Actually during those first days he had several opportunities to talk to Stella—short ones mostly but a few that were longer, like that morning in the kitchen before Julie came down, he and Stella got the breakfast—but she was on her guard, as if she suspected him, with a self-consciousness and awkwardly cool politeness that made her a stranger to him. It annoyed him that she should be so much cooler to him when they were alone than when Julie was with them, undercutting somewhat his sense that she was enjoying the visit as much as she claimed. It annoyed him that she gave him no help when they were alone, as if it had not occurred to her that there would not be many opportunities and you ought to seize the chances you have. He was not capable, yet, of seizing his opportunities, because the visit was young and he was in a mood to procrastinate, being rather scared by the novelty and daring of his intentions. Of course he had no intentions. He thought: if she makes a move, I'll respond. Otherwise we'll just sit and have another visit.

But after she had been at the Cape a day or two, William Camden was shocked by a sense of something deliberately provocative, deliberately sexy about Stella Gerber—this supposedly most reliable of his wife's friends. The instant her husband's back was turned. Even the way she walked—as if always on tiptoe, sliding silently about the house in her short

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little shorts. Green or yellow, calculated to emphasize her impertinent little bottom, with a shortness and looseness around her deliberately slim thighs to emphasize obscene possibilities. It shocked him to see how young her thighs still looked, as if that made them more naked, with a faintly olive tinge in her silver-colored bathing suit. Suddenly it dawned on him: this young woman is obsessed with nakedness. Letting her baby run around with a naked bottom half the time. Not to mention her habit, which he had noticed before, of pulling out her shirt tail. A nervous habit someone ought to tell her about. He hoped no one would. She couldn't help it. Nothing deliberate about it, and surely no sane person would think of transferring the nakedness of an innocent baby to the mother. Then one evening—Wednesday night—he noticed that Stella was watching him rather than Julie while she sang with her guitar. They talked, and she was attending to him, bringing back his points that were lost when Julie interrupted, laughing at his jokes. He wondered how long this had been going on, with a shock of flattered surprise at its meaning: that she was attracted to him. Really: How much? It set in motion a whole machinery of alarming new thoughts. Suppose she decided to make it explicit? Suppose she made an advance to him or tried to seduce him? What would he do then? Would he have the strength of character to respond? I mean, would he have the strength of character to put her off? And could he put her off without losing her respect? I mean, could he refuse her and still get her to seduce him?

The idea of seducing Stella Gerber first entered William Camden's head on Tuesday night of her visit, when the conversation turned to scandals, infidelities, immoralities among the people they knew and didn't know. She knew lots of things they didn't know and made it all very funny, and Julie could hardly stop laughing. Take the case of Baldwin Frazer—do you know him?—such an *old*-looking old man, you'd think—who managed to keep going a homosexual affair with one of his students and a heterosexual affair with the student's wife at the same time and ended up recommending both of them for the Peace Corps. Take the case of Alicia Kirkpatrick,

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hooked on dope, who prostituted herself nightly in the back corner of the third floor of the library stacks, whose instructor was so grateful that he wrote her term papers for her. Take the case of Oscar Burns, the student who politely requested the university administration to make a public endorsement of the principle of free love, who failing that then made the mistake of asking Peter Vernon to endorse it from the pulpit. Saying what a breakthrough it would be for sex if we could only get one church to declare on its behalf—the mistake being his not knowing how conservative Peter has become, how mothers rely on him to explain to their daughters the virtues of being chaste (and he actually does so, very effectively, I've heard), and the way he really blistered the poor kid, not for being a radical but for being such a showboat. Take the case of Peter himself, who (of all people) has the best reputation of any minister in the neighborhood for saving marriages—which won't help poor Helen Meyers, though, already on the verge of her second divorce. ("*What?*" said Julie.) Seems Joe Meyers is no more the faithful type than Jerry was, which I happened to discover for myself as long ago as last January, before any of it came out. ("You?") Well, that's an embarrassing little bit, Joe Meyers coming into the kitchen and making a pass at me, without any warning whatsoever. I had to push him to make him quit. God knows what gave him the idea, which was a shock to me then, but no shock now to hear of this divorce. Which I'm glad she's getting, said Stella, for I can't get over all these women who keep martyring themselves for philandering men. I could name several—it's like a disease. Of course, poor Helen, she herself knew her first marriage was a mistake. Jerry Ludwig. I have my own theory about what made Joe Meyers think he could make a pass at me. His private rivalry with Jerry Ludwig's shade. Whatever Jerry could do, he could do better. Having married Jerry's wife, the next thing was to seduce all Jerry's former mistresses. Uh-oh, I let that out of the bag, didn't I? You knew it anyway, I guess—I don't mind. None of us were very moral in those days, anyway. Silly notions about the glamour of leaving home. Actually of the people around,

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sometimes I think you and Christine were the only moral ones, and sometimes I wonder about Christine, because I can't see Peter marrying her without trying her out first. Then Julie: "By moral, do you mean merely virgin?" "Relatively virgin, anyhow," said Stella. "Then Christine is the only one," said Julie, "because I was pregnant when we got married. I thought you knew that." Which made Stella look up startled and then exclaim, "Good for *you!*" while she darted a quick inquisitive glance at William Camden. Adding quickly, "I mean I *trust* it was good for you." The talk went on, Julie offering the standard explanations of that old decision and Stella becoming jargony after a while, saying that with all the tensions of the present day, the problem of the increasing masculinization of women and demasculinization of men, especially in intellectual circles, and the new sorts of pressures, well, it was gratifying. He forgot what it was that was gratifying. It first gave him the idea of seducing Stella Gerber, who wouldn't know these pressures unless she felt them herself. Because she had an impressionable intellect, basically simple and unimaginative—therefore, when she turned from gossip to jargon, it meant only that the voice you are now hearing is no longer the voice of Stella but of George Gerber the psychiatrist, who doubtless told her many interesting things. What first put the idea of seducing Stella Gerber into his head was when she said, "Good for you," after Julie's confession. Not just the words but the quick interested look she gave him when Julie said it—when Julie said, "I was pregnant when we got married"—that swift and involuntary reaction giving the whole show away, for she was obviously struck not by the consequences of that pregnancy (not thinking of that until a moment later) but of the act that caused it. Naturally then, her eyes would dart to that member of the pair whose participation interested her the most. "Good for *you*," she said, *you* being not Julie but William. Something had discouraged her from thinking of William Camden as a maker of love, perhaps, long ago though it was, and "Good for you," she said, with a look at him, thereby conveying her interest and approval of what he had done then and thereby her

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approval of him as a maker of love in general, which thus put into his head for the first time an idea of her own willingness. First she made sure he understood the intimate truth about herself, and then she looked her approval at him, saying, "Good for you," welcome aboard. Looked at him, actually —probably— because he was the one who did the marrying when Julie got in trouble. Approving his sacrifice, which many men she knew would never have made. Her first recognition, then, that William Camden might not be so exclusively Julie's as she had thought, and she looked at him to see if that was the case. She said, "Good for you" to both Julie and himself, because they had faced up, affirmed nature and life by letting the child live, keeping it, loving it, letting time rule, gently, obeying more important principles than any adolescent claim to sexual freedom. William Camden was grateful that she understood so well, and as a result he felt more discouraged than ever in his attempt to seduce Stella Gerber. So complacent she was in the contrast between her present stability and the messes made in the past and by others. "Good for you," she said, taking such care to establish her approval of the William-Julie union—let's keep it that way. You are the good ones—good meaning chaste. The idea of seducing Stella Gerber was far from William Camden's mind, as he wondered about the disease that makes so many women martyr themselves for philandering men.

Until Thursday morning, when they were getting ready to go to the beach. William Camden went up to his room to change. When he got to the head of the stairs, Stella's door was opened by young Jimmy, and William Camden saw her, bent over, just as she was about to step into her silver-white bathing suit. "Oops," she said. "Excuse me," said William Camden, who averted his eyes and went on into his room and shut the door. Too late, for when he passed by her door young Jimmy opened it from the inside and there was Stella, all in her nakedness and not even embarrassed about it, who when she saw him, instead of ducking or arm-hugging or grabbing something, simply stood up bold and straight, with a laugh and nothing to say but "Oops." Embarrassing him much

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more than it did her. Then with fright the jigsaw fell together, thinking how she must have heard him coming yet did nothing to stop Jimmy from opening the door, and how when he saw, she stood up straight to make certain that he saw, and adding this to various remembered things that he had supposed were accidents, William Camden realized with a sudden shock of alarm that Stella Gerber was trying to seduce him by nakedness, and he wondered what on earth to do. He blushed, thinking, What must she think of me? Surely she would know it was just one of those accidents that are bound to happen in close living quarters. So she straightened up with a laugh and said "Oops," her way of minimizing the embarrassment—just one of those accidents—and he was grateful to her for not putting on a big shock act. Then with a shock things fell together as the image of what he had seen tingled in his mind, making him aware for the first time of the obsession he had with the nakedness of Stella Gerber—kicking himself now for having been so quick to avert his eyes (gentleman), wishing he'd paused if only for a second, for there she was, naked, and he hadn't seen a damn thing because she was all shadow and silhouette against the window and he hadn't dared (gentleman). Realizing which, his temper changed, and if he had sometimes imagined that it would be nice to seduce Stella Gerber, now for the first time it occurred to him that if he wanted to, he ought to try if it could be done, he ought to make use of this visit to explore the territory. Lust is lust, he said to himself, ashamed. Thinking it took a special kind of mind, sure enough, to convert an innocent and inadvertent exposure of the human body into an occasion for lust. He thought of pictures in magazines of naked bodies in accidents or war, and with the feeling that nakedness was a symbol of death, he shuddered a little at the thought of Stella's vulnerability. To spare her embarrassment he did not mention the incident when he came down to the kitchen a few minutes later in his trunks, nor did Stella in her silver-white bathing suit say anything. He felt as if their silence had a kind of meaning too, though he could not have said what.

That same afternoon, after putting the smaller children

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down for a nap, Julie and Stella went out to the garden and William went down to his study at the back of the garage, to read. After a while Stella Gerber passed by his window—then, seeing him, came in, wearing the green shorts. She had been following a bird, black on its back with some white, white underneath, with red like blood on its sides, and it looked oh so clean. "Sounds like a towhee," he said. She sat on the edge of his desk, and now she began talking about the crows, how they sounded over the woods, how she heard them in the early morning, how she heard the foghorn also in the early morning and yet the sun was shining ("That's Nobska," he said, "eight miles away"). Stella leaning on his desk like that, suddenly he had the feeling, strong, that all he need do was lean back in his swivel chair and she would come around, lean over, and put her arms around him from behind —probably she was already thinking about it, since he felt it so surely. At that moment Jimmy followed her in. "I can't find my chuck," he said. William Camden noticed how quickly she stepped off the desk. It did not escape him. She left at once to help Jimmy find his truck, but William Camden was not blind, thinking: guilt. Meaning: It's on her mind. No mistake. It was hard to go on reading, that afternoon, because he was thinking so much about what was on her mind. That was the day Julie forgot at lunch what clams had done to her last year, and though she took pride in never getting sick, she couldn't eat her dinner and directly afterwards she threw up. Everyone was very concerned, and all agreed she should go to bed. This left Stella to do all the work with the children, while William did the dishes, and it also left William and Stella to spend what was left of the evening alone in the living room. They sat in the two biggest chairs around the table with the lamp. She was reading Gibbon, and he was reading a monograph on Nero, source material for his next book, *Restraint in Kings*. No conversation, for they had nothing to say. It was warm and cozy, difficult to believe that it was Stella in that chair and not Julie. It was hard to concentrate, thinking he really ought to start a conversation. He really ought to improve this rare opportunity. It was not

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very gallant of him to start reading a book the moment he was alone with her, as if she were no different from his wife. He looked. She was absorbed in her book. It would not be very polite of him to interrupt her for a trivial conversation, with nothing to say anyway. Later, he said to himself. I might as well muff this one too. They read their books for an hour and then it was ten o'clock. She stretched and yawned and smiled. "Well, I guess I'd better turn in." About that time. Yes, he suggested they get a snack before going to bed. They went into the kitchen together, where she got the milk and made sandwiches while he stood by the stove. He ought to talk to her now, not to do so would be very rude. She was still wearing the green shorts, and she had on a yellow short-sleeved shirt. He said, "I always liked peanut butter and jelly, just like the kids." Trying to decide the best way to improve this rare opportunity. What to say first? She said, "My favorite is bacon-lettuce-tomato. B.L.T." Gathering resolution. Then for the first time it occurred to him that he wanted to kiss Stella Gerber. In her green shorts and short-sleeved yellow shirt, bent over the kitchen table spreading sandwiches, it was overpowering, this need to kiss her, even though her hair was tied in a knot. Now he was full of confidence, the certain knowledge that she would not refuse him now—not with all the things that had silently passed between them, and the final sanction she gave him by enfolding him in her arms this afternoon. Except that she had not enfolded him in her arms this afternoon. Therefore it was only the things that had *not* passed between them—silently or otherwise. Therefore it was better to lead up to it gradually—learn his way as he went. He said, "For lunch at the university, I eat the same thing every day. I figure why should I waste my energy on that kind of decision?" She said seriously, "George is just the opposite. Everything that goes into his mouth is a major experience. A crisis." Then he formed his plan. The thing to do was to praise her beauty. He said, "I have a small stomach. I can't take a great big meal at one time. Small meals and in-between snacks, that goes best for me." He thought she would find it vulgar if he began by praising her beauty. She must

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have heard that line a thousand times. She said, "You're thin. I doubt if you're the kind who'll *ever* put on much weight. That means longevity." He bit into his sandwich. It was impossible, of course, to launch into his plan while eating a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. He said, "There's no weight problem in my family. Julie thinks she's going to have a weight problem later, but I don't think so." He knew exactly what was going to happen: they would keep on talking about food and weight until they had finished their sandwiches, and then they would say good night. That's what came of not having a plan. Muffing it again. That was the trouble with plans. Nothing was any good unless it was spontaneous. He tried to think what his feelings were, so that he could say the most effective spontaneous thing. She said, "I'm thin too. My eating habits are like yours. I guess we're pretty lucky, but I'm not so sure. I may get a weight problem someday even so. Nine women out of ten have one, past a certain age." He thought how familiar this all seemed—the kind of conversation he and Julie were likely to have over a peanut butter sandwich. His difficulty was that it was hard to remember that this was the Stella Gerber, here in the kitchen with him. His difficulty was the impossibility of forgetting that this was Stella Gerber, the Stella Gerber. Then suddenly the words occurred to him. He looked at them, turned them over in his mind, inspected them, and they seemed good. Spontaneous. Unlikely to offend her, and easily retractable if they did. He said, "One thing I've completely lost my taste for is ice cream." Thinking he ought to wait a moment or two before springing his words. Since he had the words now, he could afford to.

For once he had made up his mind, William Camden was just as capable of action as anyone else. Everything was going for him, and he knew it. She was drinking her milk, having finished her sandwich. He watched her, ready to begin. She rinsed her glass out with water. Then she took his glass and rinsed it too. "If you don't rinse out milk it forms a crust," she said. All was lost. Now she would say good night. He would turn out the light and switch on the upstairs one for her. Therefore it was time to act, the decisive moment. He

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took a breath and brought it out, clear and distinct, the first move. "It sure seems funny," he said, not knowing what he was saying or why he had said it. "What's funny?" she said. *Now* he brought it out. "You making sandwiches and talking to me like this." "That's my life," she said. "What's so funny about it?" She looked at him, but he was in too deep to back down now. He said, "I don't know." Muffed. Yet her look was noticeably sympathetic, as well as inquisitive, definitely as if she wanted to help him say whatever it was he wanted to say. She said—quietly—"That's my profession—housewife." Maybe he was blushing because suddenly she began to smile. Amused by him. Which goaded him to make it clear. And suddenly it was easier—a little. "That's just what I mean by funny—how well you seem to fit in here, just as if you were one of the family." He saw her amusement soften into something gentler. Enough to enable him to take a breath and cast himself adrift on that gentleness. So he was able then to say: "Like this evening—almost as if you were another wife."

There! By God, that should do it? Cleverer almost than he knew, William Camden was a switchman in the yards of conversation, and he had just invented the kind of switch that if she took the right turn would take her just where he wanted, and if she took the wrong turn she would never know it had been there. She took the right turn, grasping his meaning: "I know what you mean," she said. Did she? She couldn't, and remain so casual. He felt hot in his head. But he plunged on anyway. "Sometimes I half wish you were," he said. There! The old technique. He had not forgotten it.

He heard the words coming out in his voice, unthought, impulsive, stunned to realize what he had just said. Especially in the silence—Stella wiping her hands on the towel by the sink—while he wondered what the hell made him say a meaningless thing like that. Which she had heard him say and was now thinking about. A harmless remark, a bit of gallantry. "Wish I were what?" she said. "Another of your wives?" "That's what I said, I guess," he was obliged to admit. She grinned at him. "That's what I thought you said," she said.

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Then there must have been something in his look, because Stella Gerber said, "Are you being serious?" A harmless bit of flirtation, and Stella Gerber asked if he was being serious! Stella Gerber was doing her own work at the switches, then, opening up the main line. Confidence now. He said, "Partially." *Stella:* Partially serious? *William:* Well, yes, in a sense. (Pause, How partially can you get?) Sure, yes, I'd gladly have two wives—sometimes. *Stella:* Including me, you mean? *William:* Of course. *Stella:* What would you do with two wives? *William:* I'd manage. *Stella:* What would I do with George? *William:* Oh, we could work him in somewhere. *Stella:* Do you know me well enough to make me a second wife? *William:* I think so. *Stella:* You like me that well—I mean well enough? *William:* Sure. Do you mind? (Risk.) *Stella:* Why should I mind? I love you dearly, I always have. *William* (dizzy and unbelieving, sensing mockery): I talk too much. *Stella:* Why say that? I like you, you like me. I take it that's what you're trying to say. Right? *William:* I guess so. *Stella:* No harm in saying that, is there? *William:* No. *Stella:* It's not as if you were being unfaithful. *William:* No, I guess not.

Then suddenly Stella said, "Now let's go to bed!" It shot through him like a rocket and disappeared like a dandelion because of course she didn't mean that. She went out of the kitchen, and he, following, switched off the light. She stood at the bottom of the stairs while he went to the living room table and switched off that light. When he got back to the stairs he switched on the light to the upstairs hall, and he followed her up the stairs. She was tiptoeing. She opened the door to her room. Quickly he whispered, "Good night." "Good night," she replied. Then she put out her hand and patted him on the arm. He opened the door to his room with Julie before she had shut hers. He waited his turn in the bathroom.

Julie was asleep. Lying beside her, William Camden was elated. So far, so good. So very good. Listening to Julie, thinking of her nausea, ashamed of his elation. Hoping she would be better in the morning. Thinking, what more could a man ask? If her word "love" was to tease, at least she was

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willing to say she liked him, and now they could talk forever. It wasn't as if he was being unfaithful—she said so herself. The touch on his arm—he still felt it. Was anything ever so gentle? Which made him wonder why he hadn't kissed her. Then he began to get angry. Because she hadn't let him kiss her, she hadn't given him a chance. Because then just when the doors were suddenly opened to an unlimited future, abruptly she slammed them shut again, saying, "It's not as if you were being unfaithful." Warning him—what was all right to be, and what was not. It was kind of her to put it like that, saving him from humiliation. He blushed, guessing how she had seen through him and felt the need to put it tactfully—the brush-off. And how stupid he was, not to recognize the inquiry, the fair chance she offered him, to which he should have said, Unfaithful is just what I had in mind, my dear. Muffed. And then she said, "Now, let's go to bed!" Brisk, brusque, brush-off, bitchy women who lead you on to stick your neck way out, all phony and gentle, and then, bang! that's that! Yet she did pat his arm. Angry to think of her pitying him, the pity pat, he hadn't asked for that, so who the hell was she? Then she said, "Now let's go to bed," and God how stupid could you get, he all the time supposing that she had meant, You go to your bed, I go to mine. Saying it directly after asking him if he wanted to be unfaithful with her. What did she mean? She said, "Let's go to bed," and she waited for him at the foot of the stairs, and at the top she opened her door. Thus turning him away. But of course she opened her door: you can't get into a room without opening the door. And she didn't close it in his face: it was he who made the decision by opening his own door, *before* she had closed hers. On the other hand (relief), she had said good night when they got to the top of the stairs. That was dismissal, all right, and he began to get angry with her again. But then he remembered: when they got to the top of the stairs, he said, "Good night," first, rather quickly, actually, to avoid alarming her with thoughts that he had designs on her. So it was he who had been brisk and brusque, who had led her on to stick her neck way out, who, after she had said, "Now

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let's go to bed," waited until she had actually got her bedroom door open before he said, bang! "Good night." Damn! What must she think of him now?

William Camden was more agitated that night than he liked to be. He did not like the state of mind where you start looking for all sorts of hidden meanings in perfectly normal remarks. He guessed it was pretty doubtful that any girl, even the boldest and frankest, would have meant, at that moment, "Now, let's go to bed." Still, the thought had occurred to him, enough to worry him, so that it was not a total impossibility. He was glad he had been a gentleman. He guessed he had a duty to Stella Gerber always to be a gentleman. But it occurred to him, the only way to resolve the issue would be to look into the possibilities. Of going to bed, that is. Whether it had occurred to her is what he meant. He guessed the inquiry would be easy now, since it was known that she loved him, more or less dearly.

On Friday they went to Provincetown and did not get back until after supper. Tired by the time they got the children to bed, Stella and Julie spent the rest of the evening reading. William Camden was satisfied. On the drive, both ways, Julie sat in front, Stella behind, with the children distributed here and there. The women had their hands full with the children. The memory of what they had said last night stayed with him through the day, giving him a warm and pleasant feeling. He was glad to see that it had not changed anything, that Stella and Julie were the same as always, everything still friendly and cooperative. Naturally there was no opportunity for him to exchange any more words with Stella—which was unnecessary in any case, since he knew that she liked him. The trouble was that inwardly Stella Gerber was alarmed by what might be on the mind of her old friend. Though it seemed harmless enough—this talk of liking each other—she knew when a man was working at the lock, she had a long familiarity with that kind of thing, and it worried her to see it hap-

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pening in old reliable William Camden. Therefore she must warn him, as gently as possible, which she did all during the day by scrupulously acting as if nothing at all had happened, avoiding all the opportunities to give him knowing looks or private words—a subtle coolness towards him that only he would recognize while she increased her efforts to be (pointedly) close and chummy to Julie. It annoyed him: she was taking it all too seriously, as if he had made a terrible confession last night. The trouble was that Stella Gerber did not seem aware of the seriousness of the conversation they had last night. She acted all day as if nothing unusual had happened at all. The only explanation was that she had forgotten it, as if it were only the most natural thing in the world for people to tell each other that they liked each other. Actually the day was full of tension, increasing in the afternoon and until they got home. Though nothing was said openly, you could feel it, the tight strain that each of them felt in the other's presence: Stella's guilt, Julie's suspicion. Not that Julie was suspicious of anything or that Stella felt guilty—it was only that the stimulation of communal living was beginning to subside: a week is a long time for any two families living together. It was merely that they had over-reached themselves. It was a mistake to take all those children on a long all-day excursion like that, stupid to think that they could take their naps in the car. Naturally they were tense. Who wouldn't be with all those kids bawling in the car for two hours on the way home? "Silence is so good," said Stella when the kids were finally in bed. "Children's voices are so musical," said Julie. William Camden felt as if he had been screamed at all day, although actually the screaming was only half a day. He was glad to sit in his chair. He had a vague feeling of having done an unusual number of foolish things recently—foolish things he had said last night and a foolish reaction to them, topped by today's foolishness that they all shared. He felt as if his reputation had been damaged by these things, and he was glad nobody was saying anything about it. Tired. To hell with it, he said.

Saturday was quieter. William Camden was past all his

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foolishness now. He was surprised at himself, wondering what crazy thing had got hold of him on Thursday to make him think that Stella Gerber wanted to seduce him—his guest, who was after all only Stella Gerber, the same he had known for years. At the beach in the morning, by being nice and fatherly to the children and by talking in an unusually relaxed way impartially to Julie and Stella, he tried to convey the impression to Stella that he knew he had been foolish but was all right now. He talked at length about all the things the sea had meant to him since childhood, and he was surprised by his own flow of quasi-poetical ideas. He could tell that Stella was impressed. She listened, and after a while she said, "Did you know that Joe Meyers once wrote a long symbolic poem about the sea?" Joe Meyers? Does *he* write poetry, for God's sake? She laugned. Then she told this long story about how Joe wrote this poem which he didn't want to show to Helen until he got it right because he meant it as a kind of present to her, and so he asked Stella to read it because he wanted to get a woman's reaction—"Me, of all people! What do I know about poetry?" How the poem was full of symbolic jellyfish and whales and undersea caverns—probably very sexy but sure as hell *she* couldn't figure it out. She read it, but what could she say? And she kept wondering why he had picked her to read it instead of someone intelligent like Nancy Watts, not knowing what to make of it when he explained that she was more womanly and he wanted to get the womanly reaction since it was a poem for a woman. Well, her womanly reaction was that she couldn't make head or tail of it except that she thought the symbolic jellyfish was rather repulsive, but that's beside the point. He asked, Can I come over some evening and *discuss* it with you, and naturally she served him coffee though there wasn't much she could discuss, and then it came out, when she went into the kitchen (*kitchen!* he thought), how he followed and suddenly tried this pawing act on her. (Well, thought William Camden, at least I didn't do that.) Repeating again how shocked she was, and how she really had to struggle, and how apologetic he then became, and how crazy and funny it struck her, his notion that he

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could seduce her by writing about a symbolic jellyfish and caverns under the sea where the whales go to hide. So William Camden was warned again. It irritated the hell out of him. He thought, If she didn't like what I said Thursday, why doesn't she come right out and tell me? Instead of all these symbolic jellyfish.

At lunch she suddenly said, "Oh Good Lord!" What's the matter? said everybody. "I forgot to get money when we were in the village. I've got to cash a check before we leave." William can take you down this afternoon, said Julie. Sure, he said. "I hate to ask you," said Stella. "I would appreciate it, though." Of course. He guessed that her forgetting to cash the check in the morning was not entirely accidental. William Camden braced himself for what might be coming. He drove her down to the village right after lunch. There was no reference to it on the way down. He introduced her to the clerk and vouched for her, and she got her money. Then they got into the car again and started back to the house. She said, "Thank you. I hate to make you take this extra trip." Then there was a silence. He guessed she had something important to say but couldn't bring herself to say it. He ought to help her bring it out. He realized that this was the third or fourth big opportunity that he was muffing this week, and he knew it was his last. Actually it had gone very well, he had prepared her very delicately and tactfully, but the time was at hand for his bold stroke. Therefore he said. Except that he had wasted every moment. He was disgusted to think of the mild little words that had so satisfied him on Thursday night, because look, what good had they done? How was the situation any different from what it was before? Except that she loved him. She had said it. But how could she have said anything else, being only polite? She was sitting beside him in the car, in her yellow shorts, and her thighs were darker than when she came but still looked young out of the corner of his eye. Time for his bold stroke. Therefore he said. Except that he had to lead up to it delicately, with his strong sense of the warnings she had given him—not to be unfaithful, and then Joe Meyer's poem. He was turning up the driveway to the house, time

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almost gone. Therefore it came out—impulsively. He said.

Because suddenly he noticed a change within—a feeling. Something with a lot of power: it was Stella Gerber sitting beside him, her shorts, her thighs, and it was a confident feeling, assuring him of the urgency of his needs and of the imminence of their fulfillment, so strong it was physical, almost, with sensation centering in his chest and radiating both ways—up to the crown of his head and down to the root of his belly. Such a feeling told him what was wrong in all his games with Stella Gerber up to this point: too many words. As if he had been trying to prime a pump with words. No doubt it was his own pump he had been trying to prime, and knowing suddenly, mystically, that it was in good order, he resolved to use no more words. Simply act and explain later. He was turning up the driveway to the house, time almost gone, and therefore he postponed beginning. He said.

He said: That talk we had Thursday night. *Stella:* Yes. *William:* You remember it? *Stella:* Yes. *William:* It's been on my mind. (Not his fault, that is. In low gear, he was getting the car up the hill, easing it past the rock that stuck up in the middle of the driveway.) *Stella:* Has it? (Now leveling out in front of the garage. He looked about quickly for signs of Julie and children. Not in sight.) *William:* I hope it didn't upset you. (Moving the car into the garage. Turning off the engine. Time to get out, time all gone, Julie in the house waiting for them.) *Stella:* Why on earth? Why should it upset me? (Noticing that she made no move to open her door either. Because she wanted to talk as much as he did. A conversation in the garage.) *William:* I don't know. (How lame can you get? Try again. Get to the point.) When you were talking about Joe Meyers this morning—(Oh Christ, this was lamer still. Of all possible approaches he chose the weakest. How could he be so eloquent in normal times and fall so apart under stress?) *Stella:* Joe *Meyers?* What's he got to do with it? (Actually it wasn't such a bad approach.) *William:* I wondered if it was meant to be a warning to me. *Stella:* A warning? *William* (keep your dignity): Is that neurotic of me? (Yes.) *Stella:* What should I be warning you about? (You

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couldn't say he didn't ask for it. Too late now, though, unless you want to drop the issue. But you can't even do that.) *William:* It *was* neurotic of me. (Unable even to express his fear. Good sense, actually, to suggest the fear lightly and let her figure it out. That way you minimize it and get the point made, both.) I have an excessive imagination. (For if she did not suspect him of trying to seduce her, how could he possibly say what he meant? This was a case where the apology invents the crime.) *Stella:* Did I offend you? (Heavens, what now?) *William:* Good Lord, how would you have offended me? *Stella:* Because I mentioned his ridiculous poem—maybe—after you had been talking so nicely about the sea? *William* (relieved, assure her, ease her mind, be nice): Oh no no no, never mind that. That was very funny, about that poem. *Stella* (thoughtful—on the trail now, tracking it down): Joe Meyers was making a pass at me. Is that the point? *William:* You don't like people to make passes at you. *Stella* (smiling): Well, that depends on who it is. You never made a pass at me. *William* (nailed): I thought maybe, when you told about Joe Meyers, maybe you thought I was, Thursday night. *Stella:* Is *that* what's bothering you? *William*: I told you I was imaginative. *Stella:* Well, as I recall it, you merely paid me a compliment in a roundabout manner. I like compliments and probably dragged it out of you. *William:* I wouldn't say that. *Stella:* You worry too much about expressing yourself. *William:* I must be pretty dull. *Stella:* I never thought so. (Stella's shorts, Stella's thighs.) *William:* That's—nice. (Was that the end of it? The conversation in the garage, Julie waiting in the house. Didn't she know what he meant? Feel his meaningful feeling?) *Stella:* You're very sweet and much more inhibited than you need to be. (Get that.) *William:* That's fine, except that I'm married—and so are you. *Stella:* Is that relevant? *William:* Isn't it? *Stella:* Is that what inhibits you? *William:* I don't know. You think I'm more inhibited than I should be? *Stella:* Now I'm not so sure, all of a sudden. (Watch it, danger.) What's on your mind? (Direct question, calling for a direct answer. Be careful with your direct answers.) *William:* I'm wondering what you *think* is on my

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mind. *Stella:* You first, my dear boy, that's only polite. *William:* Well—it's hard to say. What's on my mind. *Stella:* Maybe we'd better drop the whole thing. *William* (despair): Oh God. *Stella:* I mean, we don't seem to know what we're talking about. *William* (very anxious to detain her, not let her go, feeling very much like a fool): I'd like to find out what we're talking about. On Thursday night you said—I mean I said— *Stella* (merely smiles): You want to retract what you said then? *William:* God no. I was wondering (I was wondering what would happen if I made a pass at you like Joe Meyers. No. I was wondering what would happen if I asked you to go to bed with me. No. William Camden knew that the time had come for the feeling to act, to lay hold with hands, that if you try to pave the path too far with words they will double back on you and tear up the path you have paved. The problem was to know whether that time had come. I was wondering—he said—but she said, instead) *Stella:* You sound like a bashful man trying to propose. *William:* I'm already married. *Stella* (more seriously): Do you wish you weren't? (The question frightened William Camden. Though it pushed things forward, maybe, in a mighty stride, it was too big, too direct. Problems of loyalty were involved, that was the truth, all right.) *William:* No. *Stella:* You know, Julie's one of my best friends. (Now what?) *William:* Yes. Your friendship means a lot to her. (Ease the conscience.) *Stella:* To me, too. (A silence.) You're one of my best friends, too. And one of my oldest friends. (Again, silence.)

The silence because William Camden was caught absolutely motionless between the ambiguities of interpretation as to what she meant. She looked at him, and then she said: Is there something you're trying to say? *William* (Don't deny it now. Now is the time for honesty. Only frankness and honesty can get you out of this kind of a knot): I guess not. *Stella:* There isn't? *William* (correct that mistake): That is, I have no right to say what I was trying to say, that's the point. *Stella:* No right? But why? Something about Julie? *William:* Oh no no no. *Stella:* About me? *William:* Yes, in part. *Stella:* That you have no *right* to say? *William:* Because it would be

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too bold and audacious. *Stella:* Oh ho! Sounds like you're trying to make me a proposition. *William:* Trying not to. *Stella:* Trying and trying not to at the same time? *William:* That's what I mean by audacious. *Stella* (thoughtful now, quiet): You want to make love to me?

There it was, by God! The point itself, the very thought, as explicit as words ever need be, quietly bursting in the air as if it were nothing at all, arresting his breath. Everything depended now on William, to catch the point in his hands and not let it get away again. He said: Is that so terrible? *Stella:* Who said it was terrible? *William:* It doesn't shock you? *Stella:* Are you serious? *William* (despair): It *does* shock you. *Stella:* Shock *me?* What do you take me for? Why should it shock me?

William Camden had nothing to say. The only thing left was that meaningful feeling, which was getting tired of advising him to action—whose decline he might yet be able to arrest. Because the game was won—at last, he moved. Because the game was lost, and it was to escape words that he leaned towards her now, intending to put his arm around her shoulder. To see what we shall see, to see if she meant it about not being shocked. The trouble was, at the same moment, Stella Gerber moved too. Much faster than he was moving, she yanked open the door and slipped briskly out of the car. Dodging him, saying, "We've got to go up. Julie'll be wondering." The dodging seemed playful, and for a moment he thought it was a game, and he leaped out after her, following her out of the same side of the car, trying to catch her before she got out of the garage, but she ran—or walked fast—and as soon as they were out of the garage, with the eyes of the house now upon them, the chase had to be abandoned. In an instant they were both again sedate, walking side by side up the path, only breathing a little heavily, that's all. Amusement in her dark brown eyes again, and she said to him quietly: You really mean it? *William:* I apologize. I feel like a damn fool. *Stella:* (almost laughing) That's not a very productive approach, is it? *William:* What? *Stella:* You want someone to go to bed with you, you've got to make provi-

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sions, find ways and means, make it attractive. Practical planning and the arts of persuasion. *William:* I'm not very good at either. *Stella* (softer, for they were almost to the house) Relax. It's very nice of you—very flattering—but obviously this is no time—

They went into the house, but he knew that an agreement had been made. He did not know what agreement, but the game was won, and all that remained was to work out a time (and place), since obviously this is no time— Triumphantly won, and with it the end of urgency, groundwork completed, she having turned his point into words they both understood, filed in a particular event to which they could return by cross reference at any time, so that it was no longer necessary to get it all in by the end of the visit. Notice that she did not say no. She said, "Who said it was terrible?" and "Why should it shock me?" She gave advice on how to get someone to go to bed with you ("practical planning and the arts of persuasion") and said that she was flattered. She said obviously this is no time, and obviously it was no time. That afternoon she and Julie took a walk by themselves to the water tower. Wise move on her part, to avert suspicion. Time and place would come later. But she was avoiding him. She was mocking him of course ("very flattering")—his stiffness, formality, ineptness, exaggerating indirectness. Still, she did not say no, and she asked, why should it shock *me*? This was punishment for his vagueness—retaliate with a vague answer. The game was only falsely won, for actually it was lost in the vagueness of her no, which would become definite as soon as he returned to the cross reference ("are you serious?"). The game was lost, because though it was not terrible and though he should have simply been more direct, it was his not having been so that had lost the game, which she was kind enough to hint. If obviously this was no time, what time meant was anytime these last five years. That evening they played Monopoly. The game was won, and he exulted in the future. This meaningful feeling of well-being, he wondered where it came from, then remembered, because Stella Gerber had promised to sleep with him some day, as soon as he could plan it out practically.

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It made him sore because she seemed so indifferent and secretly sassy, asking him to exercise the arts of persuasion on her. Play games. Made him furious, because she did not mean what she had said and had proved such an arrogant tease. Leading him on and cutting him down. Real bitch. Sarcasm: "You've got to make it attractive. Very flattering—obviously this is no time." What game was won? It was enough to make him blush, just remembering. He watched her putting hotels on the Boardwalk, cutting him and Julie down, a real sharpie, and he wondered what the hell had made him get into a situation like that, all whipped up in a nervous froth over a little bitch like her. Who was she, anyhow? Where did she get off, thinking he wanted to spend his precious love on her? Merely because she was a woman, was that his reason? Maybe the game was won—what infuriated him was the price he had paid to win it—his dignity, his self-respect. The terrible scene in the car in which the thirty-four-year-old professor of history had been reduced—had reduced himself—to the level of a seventeen-year-old timorous slob who doesn't trust anybody. He marveled at how generously she had accepted or how gently she had put him off, how tactfully she had protected his self-respect until it became absolutely impossible and she had to fly. The game ended and they all went to bed. For a long time he lay awake, listening to the sleep that had descended audibly on Julie. After tonight, only one more day. It got worse from lying in bed. Wondering if Stella was expecting him to steal across the hall into her bed? He was furious that she should have such an idea: Don't you know how thin the walls are and how lightly Julie sleeps? Of course she knew. Revulsion. I resign, he said to himself. He didn't know whether the game was won or lost, but in any case it was over because William Camden had resigned.

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Tom Clark

Where I Live

The stars flow beneath the water
The clouds freeze or collapse
In laughter, lure like a pledge
Like hockey, trust, language
Approach and spit on a flower
Cruelly and scream in the forest
Of mildness, portrayed by art
As endless steps into the sky
But while all this is going on
An aimed surmise, noiseless
As the heaven that gathers it
Banishes beauty-hemmed man
To bed, as sleep extinguishes
The planet in whirring dreams
Where slowness flows to be
Breathless, like a bicyclist.

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One

Light spray over a daisy chain of days.
Many wives, brought on rocking boats,
Dissolve in one loved damsel.
Jury of sighs, it is Time
To load the back with groceries
With my brother and my wife
Because life is a family.
Did I drive right? Risky slopes
Deer start across, hushed timber
Cool and the engine smoking.
When mouths of fog cover the truck
Pushed by wind, the ocean sends
Us violet shrouds, bears
Brush us in the dark eucalyptus.
Where the hawk dives, a flowing zone
Lights the road. A brown head whispers
In the restless advance of trees
And cars, friends of lonesome men
In the brunt of a huge wave.

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Nimble Rays of Day Bring Oxygen to her Blood

After the sponge bath
Spice cake and coffee
In a sky blue china cup

Tiny clouds float by
Like bits of soap
In a bowl of very blue water

A happy baby sleeps
In a silky chamber
Of my wife's lovely body

A leaf spins itself
The leaf 's a roof
Over the trembling flower

Everything's safe there
Because nothing that breathes
Air is alone in the world

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Bolinas

My wife's recipe for a fairy:
Put buttercup pollen
And a canary feather
In a thimble. At midnight,
Immersed in my life's current
However it may flow
In the giant life around it
That whispers like a tree
Rocked by evening light,
A tide of beams
Bears my dreambound boat,
The boughs drop peace,
A star wanders toward dawn
Over the dim wet leaves.

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Ron Padgett

Gene Lockhart's Locket

If I were to sit in this chair
laughing
when you come into the room
you would think it odd—funny
but go on about your business
cocking your puzzled face

because there is no reason for my sitting here laughing

I am not laughing

But if I were to sit here
weeping
when you come into the room
you would shy away
from my breaking heart
as much as to say Why do you do this

Now I hear you coming down the hall
I do not know whether I will laugh or cry
Your key inserted in the lock

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No Title

Loneliness comes rushing toward me
Why does it move so fast
When I am moving toward it
On soft wings
And wires that hold
Me up in the air
At a pretty good rate of speed
I'd say twenty-five miles per hour

Spelling Out

Beautiful, an O fell from your mouth
into the letters L, V and E
spelling out LVEO

Stopped

You were born already beautiful
A tulip waving in spumoni
Then stopped in complete and total silence

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Anne Waldman

How to Write

Perhaps I'm kidding myself about
the life I lead

Sometimes I feel I'm dying
like a lot of things I see around me

Then I turn on the TV and understand
that everything must still be moving

Music, for example, and I rush outside
around the corner to a concert

It's so easy

Everything accessible from where I
happen to live at the moment

Things like rock concerts not too many trees on 2nd Avenue

Once, on the Sixth Avenue bus
I got a sudden sensation
I had been alive before

That I was a man at some other time
Traveling

You would think this strange if you were a woman

If I were a man right now I'd be getting out of the draft
but I think I'd want to be a poet too

Which simply means alive, awake and digging everything

Even that which makes me sick and want to die

I don't really, you know

I just don't want to be conscious sometimes

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because when you're conscious in the ordinary way
you have to think about yourself a lot

Dull thoughts like what am I doing?

Uptown in a large crowd I want to sit down and cry
because everything is simple and complicated
all at once

Everyone has this feeling

Even people downtown

It is very basic to the way we are
which is why I can say "we"

A lot of drugs can change you if you want
because you too are made of what drugs are made of

In fact you are just a bundle of drugs
when you come right down to it

I don't want to go into it
but you'll see what I mean when you catch on

That's not meant to sound snotty
I'm open to whatever comes along

This is the feeling I get before I take a plane

Then everything's the same afterward anyway

All into one space and here I am again
alive still, same worries on my mind

The thing is don't worry!
You are doing what you have to what you can

You hear from your friends
They let you know what's happening in California, Iowa
Vermont and other places about the globe

They take you out of your little room
just like the newspapers or the news
or the man you live with

and put you in a much larger room
one in which you are in constant motion around the clock

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A Negress in China

Tom Veitch

Cora was mad. Someone had stolen her yellowish underpants.

"You know the ones," she pranted, "the ones with the loose thread at the seam."

We looked for them, but we couldn't find them.

"Who do you suppose—?"

Just then a tall negress entered the room, naked and tattooed from shoulder to foot.

For a moment we stood aghast. No one knew what to do.

"Ask her—"

Cora needed no reminding. "Excuse me, mam," she said, "have you seen a pair of yellowish underpants, slightly loose at the seam?"

The tall negress looked at Cora. We all looked at the tall negress, studying her tattoos, noticing the queer squiggles and curlycues and how they moved when she walked.

"Is these them?" she uttered, in guttural but fluent Swahili.

"Why yes, it's them!"

Cora promptly took the frail lace things from the long black hand and went into the other room to put them on...

Bill meanwhile was reading certain inscriptions along the left thigh of the negress:

"...dedicated to the one I love... to whom it may concern... enter at your own risk..."

Unappreciated literature, I thought. But marvelous in its gratuity. I can hear the gang of natives laughing, reading over the shoulder of the grizzled old tattoo-man...

"Now just here—here's a picture of my Aunt Rosanna,

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and I've put three little flowers around her neck, to symbolize her three children, all who died in the plague of '44..."

"Aw. Show us somethin' else, Massah John."

"O.K. Now if you'll look right here, between her luxurious breasts, right along this dark ripple of flesh I've written the entire words to the 'Our Father,' the 'Hail Mary,' and the 'Glory be to the Father...' In case you're in need of a prayer while you're clinging to her love..."

And cling we did. I especially was first, taking her hand and leading her into the small chapel off of the kitchen. I saw in her eyes the look that I cherished, and felt the warm response of her flesh to my advancing touch...

A wonder to run my fingers along the traceries of her tattoos, feeling with a delicate awareness the simple configurations, the down-to-earth inscriptions and sermonettes... She laughed in delight as I immersed myself in the literature of her body, the graphics of her loins and tendons... Somewhere just below her navel I got lost in a sea of colored leaves and animals, and a small deer seemed to raise his head to sniff at my approach...

And a dead sea lion washed up on the shores of my consciousness...

Winter again.

I'm locked in the barn, reading under a flickering kerosene lamp. A bitter wind is blowing through the chinks and cracks, and I pull my muffler tighter round my throat.

Studious to the last, that's me.

I notice the fuel is getting low. I must go outside to get some more wood for the fire.

It's a chore dragging your stiff and nearly frozen feet into a pair of brittle old boots that are too small to begin with...

By the time I'm at the door the wind has abated. Pulling my cap down tight over my ears and taking a deep breath, I throw the bolt back and plunge out into the drifts...

She is howling, under the barn. My poor cat, naked and shivering next to the frozen corpse of a negress... You who were once alive and warm in my arms...

Here kitty, come to Tommy...

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Meow! The cat sees the open door and runs past me into the relative warmth of my hideaway... I shut the door quickly and tromp through the knee-deep snow towards the woodshed...

Now, running my hand between her legs, over her warm furry mound, tracing the lips lightly with my fingertips... She is alive and warm... I am lying next to her. We embrace warmly. I love her. We are in love.

By what subterfuge can I...? No, not that.

The warm sag of her flesh, her warm sagging belly against mine. The soft ridges of her tattoos outlined against my own nakedness...

My personal member, alive and moving into her, carving new stories on the walls of her vagina...

"Just here, good story girl, I'll put the tale of the dragon who came to dinner... He liked the guests better than what was on the menu...

"...and next to that I'll write a history of the United States, to enlighten your friends back in Africa... Here's Patrick Henry saying 'give me liberty or give me death!' Here's George Washington reviewing the troops... What a motley crew! Old George is in pretty bad shape himself... hair falling out... wooden teeth full of termites... Look, the troops are making fun of him behind his back..."

She is delighted, of course. She feels more complete now. Not just a hodgepodge of ferns and antelopes and prayers, but a real history lesson as well!

Just then the captain comes below decks to see what's up. The captain is a woman whom I know to be really a man, dressed as a woman.

"Here, Nelly, let's see your lettuce."

O.K. 'She' obliges.

"Aw, that's a mop head, here, let me grab hold..."

I was right! There's a huge penis hidden in the mop hairs! The captain bursts into tears of rage.

"You... I'll get *you*!"

Brandishing a machete he tries to lob off my head, but I'm

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too quick for him. We wrestle on the floor planks, rolling against chairs, knocking over an iron poorboy. Tristessa is in flames. She's back against the wall, igniting the hand-carved woodwork.

"You're no match for me, Dillinger, I'm bigger than you!" So say I, squeezing his wrist until he drops the deadly blade, right into his own eye...

"Aaaagh!" He screams and I let him go. He runs to the bathroom, clutching the hurt, his arms bathed in gallons of blood...

"Well, I guess..."

Tristessa comes to me and we embrace, and the fire of her flesh melds with mine and suddenly the room is full of smoke... We cough, then throw out gills to filter the air. We lock mouths, preferring to breathe through the gills...

Not that it matters. We are being rapidly consumed in the conflagration of our own flesh and juices and soon enough we'll be a small pile of cinders and bone ash on the expensive carpet...

Goodbye, Captain...

Goodbye, lovely woman—I love you.

Goodbye. Her eye's last signal of ascent. We ascend together, in the yellow smoke of our pyre, pausing for a moment to stain the ceiling and light fixtures, then pass out a porthole into the open sea air...

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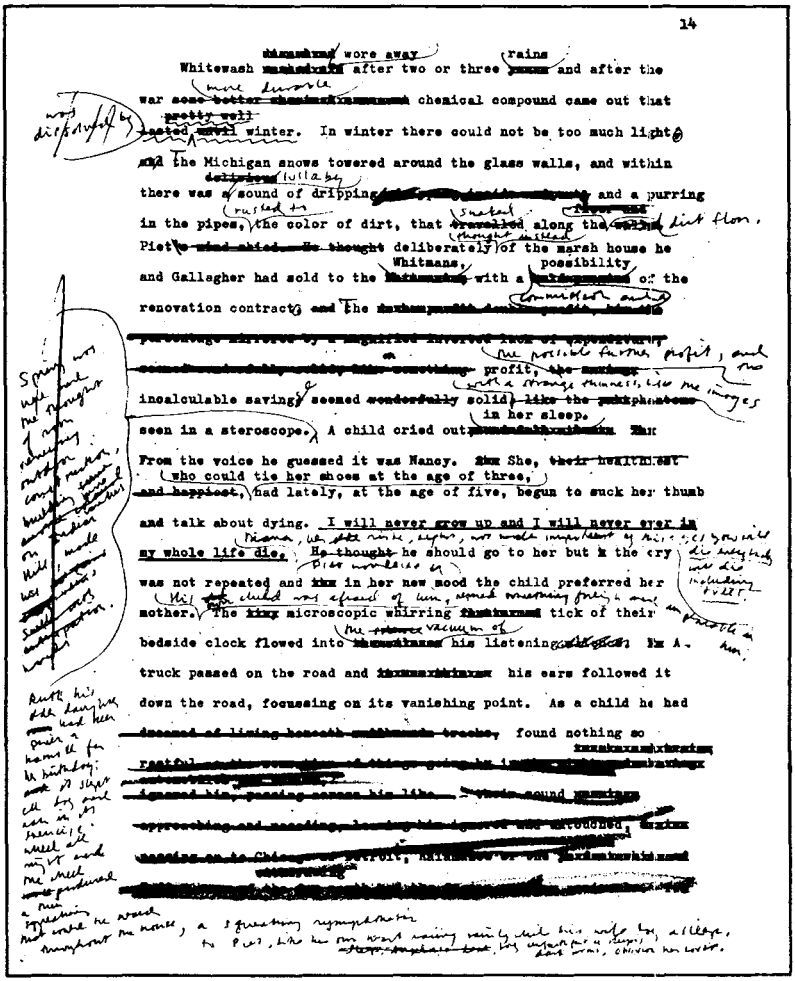

Manuscript page of *Couples*.

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The Art of Fiction XLIII

John Updike

In 1966, when John Updike was first asked to do a Paris Review interview, he refused: "Perhaps I have written fiction because everything unambiguously expressed seems somehow crass to me; and when the subject is myself, I want to jeer and weep. Also, I really don't have a great deal to tell interviewers; the little I learned about life and the art of fiction I try to express in my work."

The following year, a second request won acceptance, but Updike's apprehension caused further delay. Should there be a meeting followed by an exchange of written questions and answers, or should this proce-

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dure be reversed? Need there be any meeting at all? (Updike fears becoming, even for a moment, "one more gassy monologist.") In the end, written questions were submitted to him, and afterwards, he was interviewed on Martha's Vineyard where he and his family take their summer vacation.

A first view of Updike revealed a jauntiness of manner surprising in a writer of such craft and sensibility. After barreling down Edgartown's narrow main street, the author appeared from his beat-up Corvair—a barefoot, tousle-haired young man dressed in khaki Bermudas and a sweatshirt.

Updike is a fluent talker, but obviously not a man who expects talk to bridge the distance between others and his inner life. Therefore, the final stage of this interview was his revision of the spoken comments to bring them into line with the style of his written answers. The result is a fabricated interview—in its modest way, a work of art, and thus appropriate to a man who believes that only art can track the nuances of experience.

INTERVIEWER

You've treated your early years fictionally and have discussed them in interviews, but you haven't said much about your time at Harvard. I wonder what effect you think it had.

UPDIKE

My time at Harvard, once I got by the compression bends of the freshman year, was idyllic enough, and as they say successful; but I felt toward those years, while they were happening, the resentment a caterpillar must feel while his somatic cells are shifting all around to make him a butterfly. I remember the glow of the Fogg Museum windows, and my wife-to-be pushing her singing bicycle through the snowy Yard, and the smell of wet old magazines that arose from the

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cellar of the Lampoon and hit your nostrils when you entered the narthex, and numerous pleasant revelations in classrooms —all of it haunted, though, by knowledge of the many others who had passed this way, and felt the venerable glory of it all a shade keener than I, and written sufficiently about it. All that I seem able to preserve of the Harvard experience is in one short story, "The Christian Roommates." There was another, "Homage to Paul Klee," that has been printed in *The Liberal Context* but not in a book. Foxy Whitman, in *Couples*, remembers some of the things I do. Like me, she feels obscurely hoodwinked, pacified, by the process of becoming nice. I distrust, perhaps, hallowed, very O.K. places. Harvard has enough panegyrists without me.

INTERVIEWER

Did you learn much writing for the *Lampoon?*

UPDIKE

The *Lampoon* was very kind to me. I was given, beside the snug pleasures of club solidarity, *carte blanche* as far as the magazine went—I began as a cartoonist, did a lot of light verse, and more and more prose. There was always lots of space to fill. Also, I do have a romantic weakness for gags—we called ourselves, the term itself a gag, gagsters. My own speciality was Chinese jokes. A little birthday party, and the children singing to the blushing center of attention, "Happy Birthday, Tu Yu." Or coolies listening to an agitator and asking each other, "Why *shouldn't* we work for coolie wages?" Or—another cartoon—a fairy princess in a tower, her hair hanging to the ground and labeled Fire Exit. And I remember Bink Young, now an Episcopal priest, solemnly plotting, his tattered sneakers up on a desk, how to steal a battleship from Boston Harbor. Maybe, as an imperfectly metamorphosed caterpillar, I was grateful for the company of true butterflies.

INTERVIEWER

Have you given up drawing entirely? I noticed that your recent "Letter from Anguila" was illustrated by you.

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UPDIKE

You're nice to have noticed. For years I wanted to get a drawing into *The New Yorker*, and at last I did. My first ambition was to be an animator for Walt Disney. Then I wanted to be a magazine cartoonist. Newly married, I used to draw Mary and the children, and did have that year in art school, but of late I don't draw at all, don't even doodle beside the telephone. It's a loss, a sadness for me. I'm interested in concrete poetry, in some attempt to return to the manuscript page, to *use* the page space, and the technical possibilities. My new book, a long poem called *Midpoint*, tries to do something of this. Since we write for the eye, why not really write for it—give it a treat? Letters are originally little pictures, so let's combine graphic imagery, photographic imagery, with words. I mean *mesh* them. Saying this, I think of Pound's Chinese characters, and of course Apollinaire; and of my own poems, "Nutcracker," with the word "nut" in bold face, seems to me as good as George Herbert's angel-wings.

INTERVIEWER

After graduating from Harvard you served as a *New Yorker* staff writer for two years. What sort of work did you do?

UPDIKE

I was a Talk of the Town writer, which means that I both did the legwork and the finished product. An exalted position! It was playful work that opened the city to me. I was the man who went to boating or electronic exhibits in the Coliseum and tried to make impressionist poems of the objects and overheard conversations.

INTERVIEWER

Why did you quit?

UPDIKE

After two years I doubted that I was expanding the *genre*. When my wife and I had a second child, and needed a larger apartment, the best course abruptly seemed to leave the city,

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and with it the job. They still keep my name on the staff sheet, and I still contribute Notes and Comments and I take much comfort from having a kind of professional home, where they consider me somehow competent. America in general doesn't expect competence from writers. Other things, yes; competence, no.

INTERVIEWER

How do you feel about being associated with that magazine for so many years?

UPDIKE

Very happy. From the age of twelve when my aunt gave us a subscription for Christmas, *The New Yorker* has seemed to me the best of possible magazines, and their acceptance of a poem and a story by me in June of 1954 remains the ecstatic breakthrough of my literary life. Their editorial care, and their gratitude for a piece of work they like, are incomparable. And I love the format—the signature at the end, everybody the same size, and the battered title type, evocative of the Twenties and Persia and the future all at once.

INTERVIEWER

You seem to shun literary society. Why?

UPDIKE

I don't, do I? Here I am, talking to you. In leaving New York in 1957, I did leave without regret the literary demimonde of agents and would-be's and with-it non-participants; this world seemed unnutritious and interfering. Hemingway described literary New York as a bottle full of tapeworms trying to feed on each other. When I write, I aim in my mind not toward New York but toward a vague spot a little to the east of Kansas. I think of the books on library shelves, without their jackets, years old, and a countryish teen-aged boy finding them, and having them speak to him. The reviews, the stacks in Brentano's, are just hurdles to get over, to place the books on that shelf. Anyway, in 1957, I was full of a Pennsylvania

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thing I wanted to say, and Ipswich gave me the space in which to say it, and in which to live modestly, raise my children, and have friends on the basis of what I did in person rather than what I did in print.

INTERVIEWER

Do your neighbors—present in Ipswich, past in Shillington—get upset when they fancy they've found themselves in your pages?

UPDIKE

I would say not. I count on people to know the difference between flesh and paper, and generally they do. In Shillington I was long away from the town and there is a greater element of distortion or suppression than may appear; there are rather few characters in those Olinger stories that could even remotely take offense. Ipswich I've not written too much about. Somewhat of the marsh geography peeps through in *Couples*, but the couples themselves are more or less adults who could be encountered anywhere in the East. The town, although it was a little startled at first by the book, was reassured, I think, by reading it. The week after its publication, when the Boston papers were whooping it up in high tabloid style, and the *Atlantic* ran a banshee cry of indignation from Diana Trilling, people like the gas station attendant and a strange woman on the golf course would stop me and say something soothing, complimentary. I work downtown, above a restaurant, and can be seen plodding up to my office most mornings, and I think Ipswich pretty much feels sorry for me, trying to make a living at such a plainly unprofitable chore. Also, I do participate in local affairs—I'm on the Congregational church building committee, and the Democratic town committee, and while the *Couples* fuss was in progress, capped by that snaggle-toothed cover on *Time*, I was writing a pageant for our Seventeenth-century Day. Both towns in my mind are not so much themselves as places I've happened to be in when I was a child and then an adult. The difference between Olinger and Tarbox is much more the difference between childhood and

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adulthood than the difference between two geographical locations. They are stages on my pilgrim's progress, not spots on the map.

INTERVIEWER

What about your parents? They seem to appear often in your work. Have their reactions to earlier versions had an effect on later ones?

UPDIKE

My parents should not be held to the letter of any of the fictional fathers and mothers. But I don't mind admitting that George Caldwell was assembled from certain vivid gestures and plights characteristic of Wesley Updike; once, returning to Plowville after *The Centaur* came out, I was upbraided by a Sunday-school pupil of my father's for my outrageous portrait, and my father, with typical sanctity, interceded, saying, "No, it's the truth. The kid got me right." My mother, a different style of saint, is an ideal reader, and an ideally permissive writer's mother. They both have a rather un-middle-class appetite for the jubilant horrible truth, and after filling my childhood with warmth and color they have let me make my adult way without interference, and been never other than encouraging, even when old wounds were my topic, and a child's vision of things has been lent the undue authority of print. I have written free from any fear of forfeiting their love.

INTERVIEWER

Most of your work takes place in a common locale: Olinger. So it was interesting to see you say farewell to that world in your preface to the *Olinger Stories*. Yet in the following year you published *Of the Farm*. Why do you feel so drawn to this material?

UPDIKE

But *Of the Farm* was about Firetown; they only visit the Olinger supermarket. I am drawn to southeastern Pennsyl-

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vania because I know how things happen there, or at least how they used to happen. Once you have in your bones the fundamental feasibilities of a place, you can imagine there freely.

INTERVIEWER

That's not what I mean. What I meant to ask is not why you keep writing about Olinger per se, but why you write so much about what most people take to be your own adolescence and family. Numerous critics, for example, have pointed to similarities between *Of The Farm*, *The Centaur*, and stories like "My Grandmother's Thimble." "Flight," for example, seems an earlier version of *Of The Farm*.

UPDIKE

I suppose there's no avoiding it—my adolescence seemed interesting to me. In a sense my mother and father, considerable actors both, were dramatizing my youth as I was having it so that I arrived as an adult with some burden of material already half-formed. There is, true, a submerged thread connecting certain of the fictions, and I guess the submerged thread is the autobiography. That is, in *Of The Farm*, although the last name is not the name of the people in *The Centaur*, the geography is not appreciably changed, and the man in each case is called George. *Of The Farm* was in part a look at the world of *The Centaur* after the centaur had indeed died. By the way, I must repeat that I didn't mean Caldwell to die in *The Centaur;* he dies in the sense of living, of going back to work, of being a shelter for his son. But by the time Joey Robinson is thirty-five his father is dead. Also, there's the curious touch of the Running Horse River in *Rabbit, Run* which returns in the Alton of *The Centaur*. And somehow that Running Horse bridges both the books, connects them. When I was little, I used to draw disparate objects on a piece of paper—toasters, baseballs, flowers, whatnot—and connect them with lines. But every story, really, is a fresh start for me, and these little connections—recurrences of names, or the way, say, that Piet Hanema's insomnia takes him back into the same high school that John Nordholm, and David Kern, and Allen

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Dow sat in—are in there as a kind of running, oblique, coherence. Once I've coined a name, by the way, I feel utterly hidden behind that mask, and what I remember and what I imagine become indistinguishable. I feel no obligation to the remembered past; what I create on paper must, and for me does, soar free of whatever the facts were. Do I make any sense?

INTERVIEWER

Some.

UPDIKE

In others words, I disavow any essential connection between my life and whatever I write. I think it's a morbid and inappropriate area of concern, though natural enough—a lot of morbid concerns are natural. But the work, the words on the paper, must stand apart from our living presences; we sit down at the desk and become nothing but the excuse for these husks we cast off. But apart from the somewhat teasing little connections, there is in these three novels and the short stories of *Pigeon Feathers* a central image of flight or escape or loss, the way we flee from the past, a sense of guilt which I tried to express in the story, the triptych with the long title, "The Blessed Man of Boston, My Grandmother's Thimble, and Fanning Island," wherein the narrator becomes a Polynesian pushing off into a void. The sense that in time as well as space we leave people as if by volition and thereby incur guilt and thereby owe them, the dead, the forsaken, at least the homage of rendering them. The trauma or message that I acquired in Olinger had to do with suppressed pain, with the amount of sacrifice I suppose that middle-class life demands, and by that I guess I mean civilized life. The father, whatever his name, is sacrificing freedom of motion, and the mother is sacrificing in a way—oh, sexual richness, I guess; they're all stuck, and when I think back over these stories (and you know, they *are* dear to me and if I had to give anybody one book of me it would be the Vintage *Olinger Stories*) I think especially of that moment in "Flight" when the boy,

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chafing to escape, fresh from his encounter with Molly Bingaman and a bit more of a man but not enough quite, finds the mother lying there buried in her own peculiar messages from far away, the New Orleans jazz, and then the grandfather's voice comes tumbling down the stairs singing "There is a happy land far far away." This is the way it was, is. There has never been anything in my life quite as compressed, simultaneously as communicative to me of my own power and worth and of the irremediable grief in just living, in just going on.

I really don't think I'm alone among writers in caring about what they experienced in the first eighteen years of their life. Hemingway cherished the Michigan stories out of proportion, I would think, to their merit. Look at Twain. Look at Joyce. Nothing that happens to us after twenty is as free from self-consciousness, because by then we have the vocation to write. Writers' lives break into two halves. At the point where you get your writerly vocation you diminish your receptivity to experience. Being able to write becomes a kind of shield, a way of hiding, a way of too instantly transforming pain into honey—whereas when you're young you're so impotent you cannot help but strive and observe and feel.

INTERVIEWER

How does Mrs. Updike react to your work? *Time* quotes you as having said she never entirely approves of your novels.

UPDIKE

Mary is a pricelessly sensitive reader. She is really always right, and if I sometimes, notably in the novels, persevere without her unqualified blessing it is because somebody in me—the gagster, the fanatic, the boor—must be allowed to have his say. I usually don't show her anything until I am finished, or stuck. I never disregard her remarks, and she is tactful in advancing them.

INTERVIEWER

In your review of James Agee's *Letters to Father Flye*, you

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defend professionalism. Even so, are you bothered by having to write for a living?

UPDIKE

No, I always wanted to draw or write for a living. Teaching, the customary alternative, seemed truly depleting and corrupting. I have been able to support myself by and large with the more respectable forms—poetry, short stories, novels—but what journalism I have done has been useful. I would write ads for deodorants or labels for catsup bottles if I had to. The miracle of turning inklings into thoughts and thoughts into words and words into metal and print and ink never palls for me; the technical aspects of bookmaking, from type font to binding glue, interest me. The distinction between a thing well done and a thing done ill obtains everywhere—in all circles of Paradise and Inferno.

INTERVIEWER

You write a fair amount of literary criticism. Why?

UPDIKE

I do it (a) when some author, like Spark or Borges, excites me and I want to share the good news (b) when I want to write an essay, as on romantic love, or Barth's theology (c) when I feel ignorant of something, like modern French fiction, and accepting a review assignment will compel me to read and learn.

INTERVIEWER

Do you find it helpful in your fiction?

UPDIKE

I think it good for an author, baffled by obtuse reviews of himself, to discover what a recalcitrant art reviewing is, how hard it is to keep the plot straight in summary, let alone to sort out one's honest responses. But reviewing should not become a habit. It encourages a writer to think of himself as a pundit, of fiction as a collective enterprise and species of

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expertise, and of the imagination as a cerebral and social activity—all pernicious illusions.

INTERVIEWER

I'd like to ask a bit about your work habits if I may. What sort of schedule do you follow?

UPDIKE

I write every weekday morning. I try to vary what I am doing, and my verse, or poetry, is a help here. Embarked on a long project, I try to stay with it even on dull days. For every novel, however, that I have published, there has been one unfinished or scrapped. Some short stories—I think offhand of "Lifeguard," "The Taste of Metal," "My Grandmother's Thimble"—are fragments salvaged and reshaped. Most came right the first time—rode on their own melting, as Frost said of his poems. If there is no melting, if the story keeps sticking, better stop and look around. In the execution there has to be a "happiness" that can't be willed or foreordained. It has to sing, click, something. I try instantly to set in motion a certain forward tilt of suspense or curiosity, and at the end of the story or novel to rectify the tilt, to complete the motion.

INTERVIEWER

When your workday is through are you able to leave it behind or does your writing haunt your afternoons and echo your experience?

UPDIKE

Well, I think the subconscious picks at it and occasionally a worrisome sentence or image will straighten itself out and then you make a note of it. If I'm stuck, I try to get myself unstuck before I sit down again, because moving through the day surrounded by people and music and air it is easier to make major motions in your mind than it is sitting at the typewriter in a slightly claustrophobic room. It's hard to hold a manuscript in your mind, of course. You get down to the

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desk and discover that the solution you had arrived at while having insomnia doesn't really fit. I guess I'm never unconscious of myself as a writer and of my present project. A few places are specially conducive to inspiration—automobiles, church—private places. I plotted *Couples* almost entirely in church—little shivers and urgencies I would note down on the program, and carry down to the office Monday.

INTERVIEWER

Well, you're not only a writer but a famous one. Are you experiencing any disadvantages in being famous?

UPDIKE

I'm interviewed too much. I fight them off, but even one is too many. However hard you try to be honest or full, they are intrinsically phony. There is something terribly wrong about committing myself to this machine and to your version of what you get out of the machine—you may be deaf for all I know and the machine may be faulty. All the stuff comes out attached to my name and it's not really me at all. My relationship to you and my linear way of coping out loud are distortive. In any interview, you do say more or less than you mean. You leave the proper ground of your strength and become one more gassy monologist. Unlike Mailer and Bellow, I don't have much itch to pronounce on great matters, to reform the country, to get elected Mayor of New York, or minister to the world with laughter like the hero of "The Last Analysis." My life is, in a sense, trash, my life is only that of which the residue is my writing. The person who appears on the cover of *Time* or whose monologue will be printed in *The Paris Review* is neither the me who exists physically and socially or the me who signs the fiction and poetry. That is, everything is infinitely fine and any opinion is somehow coarser than the texture of the real thing.

I find it hard to have opinions. Theologically, I favor Karl Barth; politically I favor the Democrats. But I treasure a remark John Cage made, that not judgingness but openness and curiosity are our proper business. To speak on matters

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where you're ignorant dulls the voice for speaking on matters where you do know something.

INTERVIEWER

One of the things I've always thought would be difficult for famous writers is being constantly sent manuscripts by aspiring amateurs. Do you experience this, and if so, how do you treat them?

UPDIKE

I tend to lose them. The manuscripts. I remember myself as an aspiring writer, and you know, I never did this. I assumed that published writers had worked at it until they became worth publishing, and I assumed that that's the only way to do it, and I'm a little puzzled by young men who write me charming letters suggesting that I conduct an impromptu writing course. Evidently, I've become part of the Establishment that's expected to serve youth—like college presidents and the police. I'm still trying to educate myself. I want to read only what will help me unpack my own bag.

INTERVIEWER

While we're on the subject of your public role, I wonder how you react to the growing use of your fiction in college courses?

UPDIKE

Oh, is it? Do they use it?

INTERVIEWER

I use it a great deal. What do you think about it, as a writer? Do you think that it's going to interfere with the reader's comprehension or feeling for your work. I mean, do you go along with Trilling's idea, for example, that modern literature is somehow diluted by appearing in the social context of the classroom, or are you not concerned about this?

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UPDIKE

No. Looking back on my own college experience, the college course is just a way of delivering you to the books and once you're delivered, the writer-reader relationship is there. I read Dostoyevsky for a college course, and wept.

If what you say is true, I'm delighted. I do think it difficult to teach, as is done so much now, courses in truly contemporary writing. (At Oxford, they used to stop with Tennyson.) Of course, maybe I'm not so contemporary any more; maybe I'm sort of like Eisenhower or—

INTERVIEWER

You're over thirty—you're over the hill.

UPDIKE

Don't laugh—most American writers *are* over the hill by thirty. Maybe I'm like Sherman Adams and Fats Domino and other, you know, *semi*-remote figures who have acquired a certain historical interest. We're anxious in America to package our things quickly and the writer can become a package before he's ready to have the coffin lid nailed down.

INTERVIEWER

Well, let's think of another package now—not the package by time but by country. Are you conscious of belonging to a definable American literary tradition? Would you describe yourself as part of an American tradition?

UPDIKE

I must be. I've hardly ever been out of the country.

INTERVIEWER

Specifically, do you feel that you've learned important things or felt spiritual affinities with classic American writers such as Hawthorne, Melville, James, people of this sort?

UPDIKE

I love Melville and like James but I tend to learn more from

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Europeans, because I think they have strengths that reach back past Puritanism, that don't equate truth with intuition—

INTERVIEWER

In other words, you want to be nourished by the thing that you don't feel is inherently your tradition.

UPDIKE

Right. I'm not saying I can write like Melville or James, but that the kind of passion and bias that they show is already in my bones. I don't think you need to keep rehearsing your instincts. Far better to seek out models of what you *can't* do. American fiction is notoriously thin on women, and I *have* attempted a number of portraits of women, and we may have reached that point of civilization, or decadence, where we *can* look at women. I'm not sure Mark Twain *was* able to.

INTERVIEWER

Let's get into your work now. In an interview you gave *Life* you expressed some regret at the "yes, but" attitude critics have taken toward it. Did the common complaint that you had ducked large subjects lead to the writing of *Couples?*

UPDIKE

No, I meant my *work* says "yes, but." Yes, in *Rabbit, Run*, to our inner urgent whispers, but—the social fabric collapses murderously. Yes, in *The Centaur*, to self-sacrifice and duty, but—what of a man's private agony and dwindling? No, in *The Poorhouse Fair*, to social homogenization and loss of faith, but—listen to the voices, the joy of persistent existence. No, in *Couples*, to a religious community founded on physical and psychical interpenetration, but—what else shall we do, as God destroys our churches? I cannot greatly care what critics say of my work; if it is good, it will come to the surface in a generation or two and float, and if not, it will sink, having in the meantime provided me with a living, the opportunities of leisure, and a craftsman's intimate satisfactions. I wrote *Couples* because the rhythm of my life and my

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oeuvre demanded it, not to placate hallucinatory critical voices.

INTERVIEWER

What do you mean by attributing the setting up of religious communities in *Couples* to God's destruction of our churches?

UPDIKE

I guess the noun "God" reappears in two totally different senses, the god in the first instance being the god worshipped within this nice white church, the more or less watered down Puritan god; and then god in the second sense means ultimate power. I've never really understood theologies which would absolve God of earthquakes and typhoons, of children starving. A god who is not God the Creator is not very real to me, so that, yes, it certainly *is* God who throws the lightning bolt and this God is above the nice god, above the god we can worship and empathize with. I guess I'm saying there's a fierce God above the kind God and he's the one Piet believes in. At any rate, when the church is burned, Piet is relieved of morality, and can choose Foxy—or can accept the choice made for him by Foxy and Angela operating in unison—can move out of the paralysis of guilt into what after all is a kind of freedom. He divorces the supernatural to marry the natural. I wanted the loss of Angela to be felt as a real loss—Angela is nicer than Foxy—nevertheless it is Foxy that he most deeply wants, it is Foxy who in some obscure way was turned on the lathe for him. So that the book does have a happy ending. There's also a way, though, I should say (speaking of "yes, but") in which, with the destruction of the church, with the removal of his guilt, he becomes insignificant. He becomes merely a name in the last paragraph: he becomes a satisfied person and in a sense dies. In other words, a person who has what he wants, a satisfied person, a content person, ceases to be a person. Unfallen Adam is an ape. Yes, I guess I do feel that. I feel that to be a person is to be in a situation of tension, is to be in a dialectical situation. A truly adjusted person is not a person at all—just an animal with clothes on

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or a statistic. So that it's a happy ending, with this "but" at the end.

INTERVIEWER

I was impressed by the contrast between the presentation of oral-genital contacts in *Couples* and its single appearance in *Rabbit, Run*. Rabbit's insistence that Ruth perform the act is the cause of their breakup.

UPDIKE

No. Janice's having the baby is.

INTERVIEWER

If you say so; but I'd still like to know why an act that is treated so neutrally in the later book is so significant in the earlier one.

UPDIKE

Well, *Couples*, in part, is about the change in sexual deportment that has occurred since the publication of *Rabbit, Run*, which came out late in '59; shortly thereafter we had *Lady Chatterley* and the first Henry Miller books, and now you can't walk into a grocery store without seeing pornography on the rack. Remember Piet lying in Freddy's bed admiring Freddy's collection of Grove Press books? In *Rabbit, Run* what is demanded, in *Couples* is freely given. What else? It's a way of eating, eating the apple, of knowing. It's nostalgic for them, for Piet of Annabelle Vojt and for Foxy of the Jew. In De Rougement's book on Tristram and Iseult he speaks of the sterility of the lovers and Piet and Foxy are sterile vis-a-vis each other. Lastly, I was struck, talking to a biochemist friend of mine, how he emphasized not only the chemical composition of enzymes but their structure; it matters, among my humans, not only what they're made of, but exactly how they attach to each other. So much for oral-genital contacts.

About sex in general, by all means let's have it in fiction, as detailed as needs be, but real, real in its social and psychological connections. Let's take coitus out of the closet and off

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the altar and put it on the continuum of human behavior. There are episodes in Henry Miller that have their human resonance; the sex in *Lolita*, behind the madman's cuteness, rings true; and I find the sex in D. H. Lawrence done from the woman's point of view convincing enough. In the microcosm of the individual consciousness, sexual events are huge but not all-eclipsing; let's try to give them their size.

INTERVIEWER

I'd like to move on to *The Centaur* now. If I'm right in regarding it as formally uncharacteristic, I wonder why you prefer it to your other novels?

UPDIKE

Well, it seems in memory my gayest and truest book; I pick it up, and read a few pages, in which Caldwell is insisting on flattering a moth-eaten bum, who is really the god Dionysius, and I begin laughing.

INTERVIEWER

What made you decide to employ a mythic parallel?

UPDIKE

I was moved, first, by the Chiron variant of the Hercules myth—one of the few classic instances of self-sacrifice, and the name oddly close to Christ. The book began as an attempt to publicize this myth. The mythology operated in a number of ways: a correlative of the enlarging effect of Peter's nostalgia, a dramatization of Caldwell's sense of exclusion and mysteriousness around him, a counterpoint of ideality to the drab real level, an excuse for a number of jokes, a serious expression of my sensation that the people we meet are *guises*, do conceal something mythic, perhaps prototypes or longings in our minds. We love some women more than others by pre-determination, it seems to me.

INTERVIEWER

Why haven't you done more work in this mode?

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UPDIKE

But I have worked elsewhere in a mythic mode. Apart from my short story about Tristan and Iseult, there is the St. Stephen story underlying *The Poorhouse Fair*, and Peter Rabbit under *Rabbit, Run*. Sometimes it is semi-conscious; for example, only lately do I see that Brewer, the city of brick painted the color of flowerpots, is the flowerpot that Mr. McGregor slips over Peter Rabbit. And in *Couples*, Piet is not only Hanema/anima/Life, he is Lot, the man with two virgin daughters, who flees Sodom, and leaves his wife behind.

INTERVIEWER

Yes, of course, the Tristan story is like *The Centaur*, but even if your other novels have underlying mythological or scriptural subjects, they don't obtrude as they do in *The Centaur*. So let me rephrase my question. Why *didn't* you make the parallels more obvious in the other books?

UPDIKE

Oh—(a) I don't think basically that such parallels should be obvious. I think books should have secrets, like people do. I think they should be there as a bonus for the sensitive reader, or there as a kind of subliminal quavering. I don't think that the duty of the Twentieth Century fiction writer is to retell old stories only. I've often wondered what Eliot meant in his famous essay on *Ulysses*. Does he mean that we are ourselves so depleted of psychic energy, of spiritual and primitive force, that we can do little but retell old stories? Does he mean that human events, love, death, wandering, certain challenges overcome or certain challenges which sweep us under, have already attained classic narrative form? I don't quite know what Eliot meant. I do know that there is certainly for all of us some attraction in old stories. Mine is a generation not raised on the Bible. The Greek stories seem to be more universal coin, and they certainly have served to finance more modern creations than the Hebrew stories. (Although do read sometime Kierkegaard's splendid retelling of Abraham and Isaac

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in *Fear and Trembling*.) Freud, for one, named a number of states of mind after them.

I have read old sagas—*Beowulf*, the *Mabinogion*—trying to find the story in its most rudimentary form, searching for what a story *is*—Why did these people enjoy hearing them? Are they a kind of disguised history? Or, more likely I guess, are they ways of relieving anxiety, of transferring it outwards upon an invented tale and purging it through catharsis? In any case, I feel the need for this kind of recourse to the springs of narrative, and maybe my little buried allusions are admissions of it. It's funny, the things you don't know you're doing; I was aware of Piet as Lot and I was aware of Piet and Foxy as being somehow Tristram and Iseult, but I was not very aware of him as Don Juan. The other day I got a long, brilliant letter from a man at Wesleyan describing the book in terms of the Don Juan legend, pointing out numerous illuminating analogies. He thinks that Don Juans, historically, appear in the imperialist countries just as the tide turns: the classic Don Juan appears in Spain just as Spain has lost the Netherlands, and so Piet's activity somehow coincides with our frustration in Vietnam. All this is news to me, but once said it sounds right. I'll have to read the letter again. It elicited for me certain basic harmonies, certain congruences with prototypes in the western consciousness that I'm happy to accept.

INTERVIEWER

Let's turn from myth to history. You have indicated a desire to write about President Buchanan. Yet, so far as I can see, American history is normally absent from your work.

UPDIKE

Not so; quite the contrary. In each of my novels, a precise year is given and a President reigns; *The Centaur* is distinctly a Truman book, and *Rabbit, Run* an Eisenhower one. *Couples* could have taken place only under Kennedy; the social currents it traces are as specific to those years as flowers in a meadow are to their moment of summer. Even *The Poorhouse Fair* has a President, President Lowenstein, and

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if one is not named in *Of the Farm* it may be because that book, in an odd way, also takes place in the future, though a future only a year or so in advance of the writing—a future now in the past. Hook, Caldwell, the Applesmiths, all talk about history, and the quotidian is littered with newspaper headlines, striking the consciousness of the characters obliquely and subliminally but firmly enough: Piet's first step at seducing Foxy is clearly in part motivated by the death of the Kennedy infant. And the atmosphere of fright permeating *The Centaur* is to an indicated extent early cold-war nerves. My fiction about the daily doings of ordinary people has more history in it than history books, just as there is more breathing history in archeology than in a list of declared wars and changes of government.

INTERVIEWER

What about violence? Many critics complain that this is absent from your work—reprehensibly, because it is so present in the world. Why is there so little in your pages?

UPDIKE

There has been so little in my life. I have fought in no wars, and engaged in few fistfights. I do not think a man pacifist in his life should pretend to violence in fiction; Nabokov's bloody deeds, for example, seem more literary than lived to me. Muriel Spark's have the quality of the assassinations we commit in our minds. Mailer's recent violence is trumpery, just like Leslie Fiedler's cry for more, more. I feel a tenderness toward my characters that forbids making violent use of them. In general, the North American continent in this century has been a place where catastrophe has held off, and likewise the lives I have witnessed have staved off real death. All my novels end with a false death, partial death. If, as may be, the holocausts at the rim of possibility do soon visit us, I am confident my capacities for expression can rise, if I live, to the occasion. In the meantime let's all of us with some access to a printing press not abuse our privilege with fashionable fantasies.

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INTERVIEWER

Well, one thing I'm sure must impress everyone about your fiction: the factual accuracy. The way, for example, you can provide data for Ken Whitman's talk on photosynthesis as well as Piet's on architectural restoration. Do you actively research such material or do you rely on what you already know?

UPDIKE

Well, a bit of both, and I'm glad you do find it convincing. I'm never sure it is. A man whose life is spent in biochemistry or in building houses, his brain is tipped in a certain way. It's terribly hard I think for specialists to convey to me, as I ask them more or less intelligent questions, the right nuance—it's hard for me to reconstruct in my own mind the mind of a man who has spent twenty years with his field. I think the attempt should be made however. There is a thinness in contemporary fiction about the way the world operates, except the academic world. I do try, especially in this novel, to give characters professions. Shaw's plays have a wonderful wealth of professional types. Shaw's sense of economic process, I guess, helped him (a) to care and (b) to convey, to plunge into the mystery of being a chimneysweep or a minister. One of the minimal obligations a book has to a reader is to be factually right, as to be typographically pleasant and more or less correctly proofread. Elementary author ethics dictate that you do at least *attempt* to imagine technical detail as well as emotions and dialogue.

INTERVIEWER

I'd like to ask a question about *The Poorhouse Fair*. Many people have been bothered in that book by Conner's foolishness. He seems a bit easy as the butt of satire. Do you think there is much justification in that charge?

UPDIKE

I'd have to reread the book to know. It could be that I was too little in sympathy with what I imagine him to be standing

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for. Of course a writer is in no position to alter a reader's reaction. Performance is all, and if I didn't really give you flesh and blood, then nothing I can say now will substitute. But it occurs to me that Conner was a preliminary study for Caldwell in *The Centaur*: the bulging upper lip and a certain Irishness, a certain tenacity, a certain—they're both poor disciplinarians, I notice in thinking about them. I wasn't satirical in my purpose. I may have been negative, but satire, no. I'm not conscious of any piece of fiction of mine which has even the slightest taint of satirical attempt. You can't be satirical at the expense of fictional characters, because they're your creatures. You must only love them, and I think that once I'd set Conner in motion I did to the best of my ability try to love him and let his mind and heart beat.

INTERVIEWER

Isn't "The Doctor's Wife" an exception to your statement that you never satirize one of your characters?

UPDIKE

You think I'm satirizing the doctor's wife? I'm *criticizing* the doctor's wife. Yes, I do feel that in some way she is a racist, but I'm not trying, I don't think I'm trying, to make her funny because she's a racist.

INTERVIEWER

There's some satire in your poetry, isn't there? But I wonder why, with few exceptions, you only write light verse.

UPDIKE

I began with light verse, a kind of cartooning in print, and except for one stretch of a few years, in which I wrote most of the serious poems in *Telephone Poles*, I feel uncertain away from rhyme to which something comic adheres. Bergson's mechanical encrusted upon the organic. But the light verse poems putting into rhyme and jaunty metrics some scientific discovery have a serious point—the universe science discloses to us is farcically unrelated to what our primitive senses report

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—and I have, when such poems go well, a pleasure and satisfaction not lower than in any other form of literary activity.

INTERVIEWER

You've published work in all the literary forms except drama. Why haven't you worked in this form?

UPDIKE

I've never much enjoyed going to plays myself; they always seem one act too long, and I often can't hear. The last play I went to, I remember, was "A Delicate Balance"; I sat next to the wall and trucks kept shifting gears on the other side of it and I missed most of the dialogue. The unreality of painted people standing on a platform saying things they've said to each other for months is more than I can overlook. Also, I think the theater is a quicksand of money and people with push. Harold Brodkey, a splendid writer my age, disappeared for five years into a play that was never produced. From Twain and James to Faulkner and Bellow, the history of novelists as playwrights is a sad one. A novelist is no more prepared to write for the stage than a good distance runner is equipped for ballet. A play is verbal ballet, and I mean to include in that equation some strong reservations about ballet. Less than perfectly done, it's very tiresome. A play's capacity for mimesis is a fraction of a novel's. Shakespeare, and to a lesser extent Shaw, wrote their plays as "turns" and exercises for actors they knew—without Will Kempe, no Falstaff. Without this kind of intimacy, the chances of life creeping into a play are slight. On both sides of the footlights, I think the present American theater mainly an excuse for being sociable.

INTERVIEWER

But if I'm not mistaken, you once expressed a desire to write for the films and I think *Rabbit, Run*, in particular, is quite a cinematic novel. Do you have any such plans now?

UPDIKE

Rabbit, Run was subtitled originally, "A Movie." The

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present tense was in part meant to be an equivalent of the cinematic mode of narration. The opening bit of the boys playing basketball was visualized to be taking place under the titles and credits. This doesn't mean, though, that I really wanted to write for the movies. It meant I wanted to make a movie. I could come closer by writing it in my own book than by attempting to get through to Hollywood.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think the film has much to teach the novelist?

UPDIKE

I'm not sure. I think that we live in an eye-oriented era and that both the movies and the graphic arts, the painterly arts, haunt us, haunt word people quite a lot. I've written about our jealousy, in my review of Robbe-Grillet and his theories. In brief, we're jealous because the visual arts have captured all the glamorous people—the rich and the young.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think there is a possibility of the novelist feeling at a disadvantage, that the instantaneousness and completeness of the image is making him somehow have to run to catch up? Have you ever felt that?

UPDIKE

Oh, sure. I think we are covetous of the success, the breadth of appeal. A movie does not really require much work. It pours into us, it fills us like milk being poured into a glass, whereas there is some cerebral effort needed to turn a bunch of mechanical marks on a page into moving living images. So that, yes, the power of the cinema, the awful power of it, the way from moron to genius it captivates us, it hypnotizes us... What I don't know is how relevant attempts to imitate this instantaneity, this shuffle of images, are to the novelist's art. I think that the novel is descended from two sources, historical accounts and letters. The personal letters, the epistolary novel, the novel of Richardson which is revived now

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only as a *tour de force*, does have this cinematic instantaneity; the time is occurring on the page. But this is a minority current in the contemporary novel; we are held captive to the novel as history, as an account of things once done. The account of things done minus the presiding, talkative, confiding and pedagogic author may be a somewhat dead convention; that is, like anybody who takes any writing courses, I was told how stale and awful it is when authors begin to signal, as Dickens did, over the heads of the characters to the reader. Yet I feel that something has been lost with this authority, with this sense of an author as God, as a speaking God, as a chatty God, filling the universe of the book. Now we have the past tense, a kind of a noncommital deadness: God paring his fingernails. We may be getting the worst of both worlds.

Couples was in some ways an old-fashioned novel; I found the last thirty pages—the rounding up, the administering of fortunes—curiously satisfying, pleasant. Going from character to character, I had myself the sensation of flying, of conquering space. In *Rabbit, Run* I liked writing in the present tense. You can move between minds, between thoughts and objects and events with a curious ease not available to the past tense. I'm not sure it's as clear to the reader as it is to the person writing, but there are kinds of poetry, kinds of music you can strike off in the present tense. I don't know why I've not done a full-length novel in it again. I began tentatively, but one page deep into the book, it seemed very natural and congenial, so much so that while doing *The Centaur* I was haunted by the present tense and finally wrote a whole chapter in it.

INTERVIEWER

You speak with some regret about the present authorial disinclination to signal above the heads of the characters. I am interested in your evaluation of the success of three contemporary writers who seem to me to have maintained this willingness to signal to the reader directly. The first one I'd like to mention and get your reaction to is Robert Penn Warren.

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UPDIKE

I'm sorry. I don't know Penn Warren's prose well enough to comment.

INTERVIEWER

How about Barth?

UPDIKE

Barth I know imperfectly, but I have read the first two novels and parts of the last two and some of the short stories. I also know Barth personally and find him a most likeable and engaging and modest man. He and I are near the same age and born not too far from each other, he in Maryland and I in southeastern Pennsylvania. His work is partly familiar and partly repellent; I feel he hit the floor of nihilism hard and returns to us covered with coal dust. We are very close to an abyss as we traverse Barth's rolling periods and curiously elevated point of view. I guess my favorite book of his is *The Floating Opera* which is like *The Poorhouse Fair* in ending with a kind of carnival, a brainless celebration of the fact of existence. As it stands now, Barth seems to me a very strong-minded and inventive and powerful voice from another planet; there is something otherworldly about his fiction that makes it both fascinating and barren, at least for me. I'd rather visit Uranus than read through *Giles Goat-Boy*.

INTERVIEWER

What about Bellow?

UPDIKE

There is in Bellow a kind of little professor, a professor-elf, who keeps fluttering around the characters, and I'm not sure he's my favorite Bellow character, this voice. He's almost always there, putting exclamatory marks after sentences, making little utterances and in general inviting us to participate in moral decisions. This person—whom I take to be the author—contributes to the soft focus of Bellow's endings. The middles are so rich with detail, with charm and love of

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life; I think how in *Henderson, the Rain King* he remembers rubbing oil into his pregnant wife's stomach to ease the stretch marks. It's this professor, this earnest sociological man who somehow wants us to be better than we are, who muddles the endings, not exactly happy endings but they are endings which would *point the way*. He cares so—the way Bellow can conjure up a minor character and set him tumbling across the paragraph.

But the general question of authorial presence—I find it irksome when an author is there as a celebrity. In Salinger's later works and most of Mailer's work the author appears as somebody who counts, somebody who has an audience of teenagers out there waiting to hear from him. This kind of return to before Chekov I don't find useful, although authorial invisibility is also a pose. The proper pose may be the Homeric bard's one—he is there, but unimportantly there, there by sufferance of the king.

INTERVIEWER

What about the cultivation of pretense—playing around with it. I mean, what do you think of a writer like Barthleme?

UPDIKE

He was an art director of some sort and, just as Kerouac's work was a kind of action writing to answer action painting, so Barthleme's short stories and the one novelette seem to me to be an attempt to bring over into prose something Pop. I think, you know, on the one hand of Andy Warhol's Campbell's soup cans and on the other of the Chinese baby food that the Seven Dwarfs in *Snow White* are making. Then again you do get a hard-edge writing in a way. In one of his short stories he says that the hard nut-brown word has enough aesthetic satisfaction for anybody but a fool. I also think his stories are important for what they don't say, for the things that don't happen in them, that stand revealed as clichés.

Yes—I think he's interesting, but more interesting as an operator within a cultural scene than as a—oh, as a singer to my spirit. A quaint phrase that possibly betrays me.

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INTERVIEWER

What of writers who've influenced you. Salinger? Nabokov?

UPDIKE

I learned a lot from Salinger's short stories; he did remove the short narrative from the wise-guy, slice-of-life stories of the Thirties and Forties. Like most innovative artists, he made new room for shapelessness, for life as it is lived. I'm thinking of a story like "Just Before the War with the Eskimos" not "For Esmé," which already shows signs of emotional overkill. Nabokov, I admire but would emulate only his high dedication to the business of making books that are not sloppy, that can be reread. I think his aesthetic models, chess puzzles and protective colorations in Lepidoptera, are rather special.

INTERVIEWER

Henry Green? O'Hara?

UPDIKE

Green's tone, his touch of truth, his air of peddling nothing and knowing everything, I would gladly attain to, if I could. For sheer transparence of eye and ear he seems to me unmatched among living writers. Alas, for a decade he has refused to write, showing I suppose his ultimate allegiance to life itself. Some of O'Hara's short stories also show a very rare transparence, freshness, and unexpectedness. Good works of art direct us back outward to reality again; they illustrate, rather than ask, imitation.

INTERVIEWER

You mentioned Kerouac a moment ago. How do you feel about his work?

UPDIKE

Somebody like Kerouac who writes on teletype paper as rapidly as he can once slightly alarmed me. Now I can look upon this more kindly. There may be some reason to question

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the whole idea of fineness and care in writing. Maybe something can get into sloppy writing that would elude careful writing. I'm not terribly careful myself, actually. I write fairly rapidly if I get going, and don't change much, and have never been one for making outlines or taking out whole paragraphs or agonizing much. If a thing goes, it goes for me, and if it doesn't go I eventually stop and get off.

INTERVIEWER

What is it that you think gets into sloppy writing that eludes more careful prose?

UPDIKE

It comes down to what is language? Up to now, until this age of mass literacy, language has been something spoken. In utterance there's a minimum of slowness. In trying to treat words as chisel strokes you run the risk of losing the quality of utterance, the rhythm of utterance, the happiness. A phrase out of Mark Twain—he describes a raft hitting a bridge and says that it "went all to smash and scatteration like a box of matches struck by lightning." The beauty of "scatteration" could only have occurred to a talkative man, a man who had been brought up among people who were talking and who loved to talk himself. I'm aware myself of a certain dryness of this reservoir, this backlog of spoken talk. A Rumanian once said to me that Americans are always telling stories. I'm not sure this is as true as it once was. Where we once used to spin yarns, now we sit in front of the T.V. and receive pictures. I'm not sure the younger generation even knows how to gossip. But, as for a writer, if he has something to tell, he should perhaps type it almost as fast as he could talk it. We must look to the organic world, not the inorganic world, for metaphors; and just as the organic world has periods of repose and periods of great speed and exercise, so I think the writer's process should be organically varied. But there's a kind of tautness that you should feel within yourself no matter how slow or fast you're spinning out the reel.

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INTERVIEWER

In "The Sea's Green Sameness" you deny that characterization and psychology are primary goals of fiction. What do you think is more important?

UPDIKE

I wrote "The Sea's Green Sameness" years ago and meant, I believe, that narratives should not be *primarily* packages for psychological insights, though they can contain them, like raisins in buns. But the substance is the dough, which feeds the story-telling appetite, the appetite for motion, for suspense, for resolution. The author's deepest pride, as I have experienced it, is not in his incidental wisdom but in his ability to keep an organized mass of images moving forward, to feel life engendering itself under his hands. But no doubt, fiction is also a mode of spying; we read it as we look in windows or listen to gossip, to learn what other people *do*. Insights of all kinds are welcome; but no wisdom will substitute for an instinct for action and pattern, and a perhaps savage wish to hold, through your voice, another soul in thrall.

INTERVIEWER

In view of this and your delight in the "non-committal luminosity of fact," do you think you're much like the "nouvelle vague" novelists?

UPDIKE

I used to. I wrote *The Poorhouse Fair* as an anti-novel, and have found Nathalie Sarraute's description of the modern novelistic predicament a helpful guide. I am attracted to the cool surface of some contemporary French novels, and, like them, do want to give inanimate or vegetable presences some kind of vote in the democracy of narrative. Basically, though, I describe things not because their muteness mocks our subjectivity but because they seem to be masks for God. And I should add that there is, in fiction, an image-making function, above image-retailing. To create a coarse universal figure

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like Tarzan is in some ways more of an accomplishment than the novels of Henry James.

INTERVIEWER

As a technician, how unconventional would you say you were?

UPDIKE

As unconventional as I need to be. An absolute freedom exists on the blank page, so let's use it. I have from the start been wary of the fake, the automatic. I tried not to force my sense of life as many-layered and ambiguous, while keeping in mind some sense of transaction, of a bargain struck, between me and the ideal reader. Domestic fierceness within the middle class, sex and death as riddles for the thinking animal, social existence as sacrifice, unexpected pleasures and rewards, corruption as a kind of evolution—these are some of the themes. I have tried to objectivity in the form of narrative. My work is meditation, not pontification, so that interviews like this one feel like a forcing of the growth, a posing. I think of my books not as sermons or directives in a war of ideas but as objects, with different shapes and textures and the mysteriousness of anything that exists. My first thought about art, as a child, was that the artist brings something into the world that didn't exist before, and that he does it without destroying something else. A kind of refutation of the conservation of matter. That still seems to me its central magic, its core of joy.

—CHARLES THOMAS SAMUELS

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Anselm Hollo

Le Jazz Hot

talked to my father again a dream he seemed happy
perhaps a little older than the last time told me
he had discovered something called "*le jazz hot*"
and found it of some interest

1967

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Bill Berkson

The Correct Thing

Against the way she'd put it to a fault,
with gulls like tears upon a face,
and landlocked sound, an open "e"
that is only movement to this form;
sore enough, grand time, if you speak, write,
call, or wire in tune, so hurt
your knowledge I don't see
and go the past way out.

She is a neighbor too,
and I am getting there,
best of all, sincerely,
and knowing her true.

7.4.68

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Rebecca Cutlet

Such a flow of language!
She moves in a strange world,
essentially legitimate,
or what she gambles he tosses
into the drink with not
so much as a word, and butter
reduces to fat. He takes a chance
that this "revisionism" contends up the pitfalls.

There is a house somebody-or-other and this man in it.
Without being completely satisfactory, this is all
I can let you in on, except to say that "G",
being the sound of two rear molars and the tongue
pressed hard against the outlet, is not to be found
in the first hundred-or-so pages.
You don't mind and anyway
it is only after this that the tricks fade
away into indestructible charm, the least
common denominator of what you took this dive for in
the first place.

Follow her through her mind
as you would through a rich moist shaft
that is caving in, but at
the other end of which, where you see her
hopping up and down frantically,
there is sunlight, many photographs and some text.

9.14.68

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"Blue is the Hero...

leading with his chin, though bristling
with military honor, camp and *ora pro nobis*, rolling out
the red carpet of chance on a plea
that you might give others a front-row seat:
Lady, take off your hat. So extra-special...
Other times, it would be a roof-garden
like the one Rauschenberg has,
being no Nebuchadnezzar of the bush,
or, standing on your head,
feeling the earth has "hung" a lawn
and these dogs have come to bite you "where it hurts"—
I wonder if they've really caught the scent,
which is a poor memory in our Symbolist ears
of what it must have been like to read *The Hound*
of the Baskervilles for the first time in 1899—
oh truly modern and amused and wrong, before the cold
and the dry vermouth and everybody started
wearing sweaters, taking pills. I confess
to a certain yearning in my genes for those trips,
tonics of the drawn shade and rumpled bed,
the Albergo delle Palme in Palermo, instead
of hanging on the curb, learning to love each
latest gem "fantastic!" as the lights go out all over the
Flatiron Building, which leaves the moon, sufficiently
fa so la, and the clouds
disentangle a perfect Mondrian, pure gray,
to which you give nodding assent, somewhat true—
you are that helicopter, primping for the climb
into whose bed of historical certainty? the fuel
streaming down the sides, like fun in the sun, air in the air.

9.15.68

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Edwin Denby

Standing on the Streetcorner

Looking north from 23rd the vast avenue
—A catastrophic perspective pinned to air—
Here has a hump. Rock underneath New York though
Is not a subject for which people do care.
But men married in New York or else women
Dominate the pavement from where they stand,
Middle-age distends them like a vast dream
While boys and girls pass glancing to either hand.
Sly Carolina, corny California
Peculiar Pennsylvania, waiting Texas
You say what you say in two ways or one way
Familiar with light-reflecting surfaces.
Time in every sky I look at next to people
Is more private than thought is, or upstairs sleeping.

1948

Held

The bright young bones growing turn like green tendrils
but bright in the dark, but turning in slow young years
or like the bright flight of birds curving stilly
still almost and held by the mind's variable speed

In the mind's variable speed the young light body
and the green light hovering on fair sleeping hair
and the birdlike curve of too long limbs, wholly
held, turn in their slow darkness of yearning years.

1948

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Sonnet

Roar drowns the reproach, facing him
Quite near, subway platform, she heeds
Head tossing slow like a pony's
In the wrong, the pinto I rode
A boy of twelve, that lovely head
Quarrels I believed riders win
White-haired pass these lovers in luck
Hurry to ballet, its invention
Where there's no quarrel, but there's fate
A scream unhurried of music's choice
And we recognize the games played
In heaven, foreknowing they cease
The move, the pitch arrive, turn to air
Here, as if love said forever

1965

Brindisi

Where nervous I stand above nocturnal ships
The Appian road ends with one pillar at the shore
Ghostly Greece whispers in waves lapping lips
Lips Vergil heard here, sweet Vergil dying in despair;
The old woman who sees him sleeps in that house
By his boots she knows him, his long white coat
He foretells lottery numbers, courteous
But she don't win she says, she don't read numbers good;
Harbor, lost is the Greece when I was ten that
Seduced me, god-like it shone; in a dark town, trembling
Like a runaway boy on his first homeless night
Ahead I rush in the fearful sweep of longing
A dead longing that all day blurred the lone
Clear shapes which light was defining for a grown man

1956

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Michael Brownstein

Life

Life is beautiful. However

The only truly human, American expressions
of its staggering rich moments
(two baby bulldogs in open window, 3:17 a.m.)
Aren't really forms of expression like language, but

The only truly human, American expressions
of its staggering rich moments
(two baby tomatoes in open window, 3:17 a.m.)
Aren't really forms of expression like language, but

Parallels manifesting themselves right alongside
Those moments, like music. It is just
Your specific choice in music, the one when you respond,
Dropping onto my back as I walk past
flinging Tasty Cake...
Your breasts that have chosen their call, for always
they drift ahead of what you plan on leaving
in your mind and its musical chair.

Genius, to eat and mumble in peace...

So, the definition of tragedy is
"A waste of time that you stop to consider it"
And not stop to consider this: applying
Force to the mirror which by itself
Already is falling away from self-consciousness,
Nemesis of the 20th century... to do that
Would be a waste of time. Or would it?
Making the right choice is calm laughter
when it occurs to you except as an idea.

I say "American" because the universe, all the radar
Technicians of enticement, is American now
Entirely. I say "nineteen" because
Nineteen is your age, and take
Your life into my hands
And you take mine, we jump into the truth.

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The Colleague

Louis-Ferdinand Céline

"The kitchen and the restaurant are full of soldiers!"
"What kind? . . . French? . . . Krauts?"
"Krauts with an officer!"
"But who? . . . which?"
"They're coming up!"

It's true, I open the door, I see them . . . they create order . . . order! . . . they clear the landing . . . and our room . . . and the toilet . . . everybody out, let's go! . . . down the stairs! nobody left on our floor . . . have they come to arrest me? . . . that's my first idea . . . I want to see that officer . . . ah, here he comes! . . . I know him! . . . I know him well! . . . it's their Oberarzt Franz Traub . . . head physician at their hospital . . . I know him all right . . . dressed . . . fit to kill! . . . dagger! sword belt, tunic, Iron Cross! . . . gray pants, perfect crease . . . cream-colored gloves . . . dress uniform . . . just to see me? hmmm! . . . nobody left on the landing . . . all cleared . . . only his escort . . . well, two, three squads, armed . . . okay! . . . I wait for him to say something . . . he greets Lili, he takes off his cap, he bows . . . he shakes hands with me . . . I bring him into the room, I give him a chair . . . Bébert has the other . . . we have only two chairs . . . Bébert's great game is jumping from one chair to the other! . . . Bébert gives the occupant a dirty look . . . some nerve! That's his opinion! I look at them, Oberarzt Traub and Bébert . . . who's going to speak first? . . . as long as I'm the host, I start in . . . I apologize for the poor reception . . . our quarters . . .

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etc. . . . etc. . . . he answers in French: "*C'est la guerre!*" and a gesture meaning to think nothing of it . . . details! . . . he sweeps them away . . . introductory remarks . . . okay, okay! . . . but there's one idea he hasn't swept out of my head . . . has he come to arrest me? that's what I'm wondering . . . and this deployment of police outside our door? . . . that was how they operated when they arrested Ménétrel . . . a doctor and an escort . . . Ménétrel was a doctor too . . . this one, Traub, is the cold type of German . . . oh, of course he detests the French! . . . like all the Boches . . . no more, no less! We French are "special detestables" . . . entitled to be specially detested by every Boche in the village! . . . because we're here! and we shouldn't be! we're compromising them! . . . they all listen in on Bibici . . . all Siegmaringen! *dong! dong! dong!* Bibici tells them what to think! . . . of us and Pétain! . . . our names, our places and dates of birth, our crimes! four, five times a day! and we should all be strung up! . . . Pétain first! next the French troops in Siegmaringen! . . . three, four times a day they notified the real French! the ones we were expecting! the purest legions of the Underground! Brisson, Malraux, Robert Kemp, the colonels in Leclerc's army . . . that we hoodlums represented exactly what the real France detested most! and that they, the good Germans, should assassinate us, and right away! that we were taking advantage of their kind hearts! . . . betraying them same as we had betrayed France! that we deserved no pity! . . . exactly the opinion of my pirates on the rue Norvins . . . who at that very moment were having the time of their lives wiping me out! . . . the Bibici is the organ of Fualdès . . . it plays while they murder! . . . and the Boches fell for it! . . . four, five broadcasts a day! . . . they were waiting for Leclerc's army with open arms! ah, we filthy, mangy, lazy devourers of *Stam!* their *Stam!* we'd see if the Senegalese didn't make us vomit up their *Stam!* . . . and our guts! . . . and our blood! . . . the gutters would be full of it! the honor of Siegmaringen avenged! . . . and naturally Oberarzt Franz Traub tuned in on Bibici! . . . Our professional relations had always been correct, no more . . . he'd certainly get along better with the

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Fifis . . . he'd always refused me everything . . . like Kleindienst . . . sulphur ointment, mercury ointment, morphine . . . *Leider! Leider!* . . . he was about my own age . . . in his fifties . . . I could stand on my head before he'd admit one of my patients to the hospital! He unloaded all my cases on the *Fidelis*, I'd find them all there plus his own! . . . He'd admitted Corinne Luchaire after a terrible fuss and only on condition that she'd stay just long enough for an X-ray . . . he was like all the rest . . . he didn't want the "liberators" to say he'd shown the slightest indulgence . . .

But why now this plush-horse visit? . . . creased pants and dagger! . . . with his swastika? and all this escort? the whole landing full of them . . . I didn't get it . . . finally he speaks up . . . he starts in . . .

"Colleague, I've come to ask you a favor . . ."

He speaks French without too much accent . . . he's crisp, succinct . . . he explains that he has a patient . . . a wounded German soldier . . . who's had an operation . . . he'd like me to come and see him . . . his wound . . . a shell had blown off his penis . . . that this wounded German soldier is a married man and he wants an artificial penis . . . that these artificial penises are on sale, but only in France! . . . only one manufacturer in all Europe! . . . that he, Traub, could apply to Geneva, to the Red Cross . . . but it would be much better if I were to write directly to Geneva . . . allegedly! . . . allegedly! . . . for a wounded prisoner! . . . because the Red Cross was Gaullist . . . the French prisoners were Gaullists! and I was another Gaullist! . . . Well?

"Certainly! Certainly!"

Certainly! . . . We had a little laugh . . . wasn't it funny! . . . would I? . . . of course I would! . . .

Ah, but something else . . . he had another reason for coming to see me! . . . this is more delicate . . . he hesitates . . .

"Well, you see, I have notified Monsieur de Brinon that I am obliged to bar the *Miliciens* from the hospital . . ."

Why? . . . because they defecated in the bathtubs! . . . and wrote all over the walls in shit! "*for Adolf*" . . . Naturally Traub could understand that kind of thing! *c'est la guerre!* but the staff? . . . the nurses? . . .

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"You understand, colleague, you do understand? it won't do! . . . I've notified Monsieur de Brinon . . ."

Oh, of course! . . . he had been perfectly right! . . .

"Then you agree with me, colleague?"

Something else coming up! . . . is he going to arrest me now? . . . make up his mind? . . . the Boches are so mealy-mouthed, they'd introduce you to the guillotine . . . "won't you cut your little cigar? . . . *lieber Herr!* . . . *bitte sehr!* . . . help yourself! . . . the matches are over there!" No . . . it's not the knife quite yet . . . he wants to talk to me about de Brinon . . . his prostate . . . "Monsieur de Brinon came to see me the other day . . . he has difficulty in urinating . . . he's in pain . . . of course we could operate! . . . but here? . . . here? . . ." Brinon had come to me for advice, too . . . same answer as Traub . . . "When you get back!" . . . how pleasant and practical it is to have a phrase that fixes everything . . . "When you get back!" we might as well be going back to the moon . . . ! what were we going back to anyway?

At that point Traub's expression changes . . . suddenly . . . before my eyes . . . he takes a different tone . . . he'd spoken rather lightly of de Brinon and the bathtub . . . now all of a sudden he's talking very seriously . . . still about prostates . . . but this time it's his! . . . his own prostate! . . . "Aren't you a bit of a specialist?" . . . oh no! but I know something about it . . . he's been having trouble . . . he urinates frequently like Brinon . . . "how many times at night?" I ask him . . . "and in the daytime?" . . . "five . . . six times . . ."

"Would you examine me?"

"Certainly . . . please remove your trousers . . ."

He stands up, he goes to the door, he says three words to the sentries . . . I can see that Lili's presence embarrasses him . . . Lili goes to the door, too . . . "see that nobody comes in" . . . now he can take his pants off . . . there's only the two of us . . . and Bébert . . . but he's a man, too . . . he relaxes . . . he gets confidential . . . he unloads . . . he confesses . . . he's got plenty on his mind . . . plenty! . . . his hospital is a hell! . . . a battle, a free-for-all between the departments! the doctors, surgeons, and nuns! . . . they all hate each other, they accuse,

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they denounce! .... worse than with us! ... to see who could get who arrested! for everything! ... plots! buggery! black marketing! He confided in me, he had to get it off his chest ... it was no surprise to me ... go lift up the cover of the Kremlin ... the House of Lords ... the *Figaro* ... or *l'Humanité* ... any cover ... salons ... political parties, Castles ... populaces ... backstages ... monasteries ... hospitals ... you'll be all worn out the way they denounce each other, get each other arrested, garrote each other, drive spikes under each other's nails ...

"You won't speak of all this? ... you promise, colleague?"

"Professional secrecy!"

The tears came to his eyes ... those people in the hospital! ... he was sobbing! ... worse than the people in the Castle!

"You won't mention it to a soul?"

I swear! ... I double-swear! ... not a word! ... he wouldn't ask for advice at the hospital ... no, never! ... but he could trust me? ... *ya! ya! ya!* ... he tells me the whole story ... he'd been to Tübingen, he'd consulted a specialist, a *Professor* ... at the university ... in the Professor's opinion his prostate was quite operable ... sufficiently enlarged ... but he, Traub, didn't consider himself operable at all! ... not at all! ... in fact he was scared shitless of being operated ... and admitted it ... yelled it in fact! ... really afraid!... especially under the circumstances! so what about me? what did I think?

"The prostate, my dear colleague, you know as well as I, is subject to inflammation ... we can wait ... it will calm down ... naturally surgeons always want to operate ... eighty percent of men over fifty are prostatic ... we don't operate them all! certainly not! ... they piss on their heels now and then ... what of it? what difference? they'll die a natural death! ... they only smell of urine a little ... is that anything to worry about? you'll be careful, Traub, that's all! you'll watch yourself ... no liquor ... no beer ... no spices ... no sexual intercourse ... and in ten years you'll go back to see your specialist again ... you'll come and tell me what he thinks ... and whether he's been operated ..."

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My comforting words did him a world of good ... with his hard, Boche hatchet face, he looked at me almost affectionately ... absolutely! ... the nectar of my words! ...

"Would you examine me, my dear colleague?"

"Why, certainly!"

I slip on my rubber finger ... smear it with vaseline ... he takes his pants off ... his gray pants with the fine crease ... he kneels down on my cot ... he doesn't remove his tunic or his sword belt or his dagger ... I palpate ... yes ... it's a fact! ... his prostate is considerably enlarged ... in fact it seems rather hard ...

"Oh, all that can wait ... with a very strict diet ... your prostate will take care of itself ..."

"Excellent! ... excellent, my dear colleague! ... but my diet?"

"Noodles! ... just noodles! ... nothing else!"

It's all right with him! he adjusts his pants ... his sword belt, his revolver ...

"Oh yes, my dear colleague ... oh yes!"

"Come back and see me in a month! ... we'll see if it's better ..."

Now I'm the boss! ... very honestly, without deluding him, I'll be easier in my mind from month to month ... I'd been worried ... why all these men on the landing? this escort? ... and all armed ... I was on the point of asking him ... I never found out ... maybe everything he told me was hokum? ... but the prostate at least ... I could be sure of that ... Well, finally he gets up and leaves ... ah, one word more! ...

"You'll drop in at the hospital tomorrow, colleague?"

"Yes, yes, certainly!"

"Splendid! To see about that penis!"

He whispers in my ear ...

"Sulphur ointment! A jar! ... you'll take it?"

"Oh, certainly! Oh, many thanks!"

"And a little coffee ... you'll take it?"

Would I take it! ... he shows me a small bag ...

"Oh yes, thank you!"

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He's spoiling us . . .

"Discretion! . . . secrecy, you understand?"

"The tomb . . . the tomb, colleague!"

He opens the door . . . a word to the sergeant . . . the men all come to attention! Assembly! They go down . . . Kraut colleague Traub goes last! they all leave! . . . what had they come for? . . . I never really found out . . . to arrest me? . . . maybe not . . . one thing anyway, Traub came back to see me . . . I kept him on noodles and water for seven months . . . and then he stopped coming . . . I never heard from him again! . . . there must have been some reason for all that! . . . I never found out! . . . but I made the best of it . . . a day is a day! . . . one day is a big thing sometimes . . . and we had some coffee . . . oh, not very much . . . and some sulphur ointment . . . not very much of that either . . .

Translated by Ralph Manheim

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Travelogues

Trevor Winkfield

MARINE ANIMALS

His (running across the beach he stubbed his toe on the pail of broken shells half imbedded in the wet gray sand) sister (young Chinese girl fresh to America, already a woman not yet a man—suffered from sex guilt ((thought mother & father were watching her from heaven)), consequently found men repugnant, wore trousers) was blowing on a conch shell.

. . . . . .

. . . . . .nibbling (insects squashed between the pages of a book, trapped when the page turned, discovered when the volume reread) at the bitter tasting bark. Georges soon then a circle held aloft by twin tubes of water, no higher than the grass behind the lime-choked walls, no more visible either (back).

We were now climbing the last lap of the path to the top of the point. It was very steep, and the rocks, although dry, were gummy.

"I shan't be at all sorry to get to the top," panted Georges. "There's a rock that we can lie on up there."

I must admit that I was glad myself to get there, for it certainly was very hot, and already to the west, above the dense foliage, clouds of locusts were darkening the tropical sky.

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"There they are," Georges said, pointing to three rocky islands just off the headland.

"I wonder if anybody's ever managed to get on them?" I asked.

"Shouldn't think so. In fact if I remember correctly, well, you know that Chinese girl, well she said that they're almost impossible to get onto. I know for a fact that you can't get a boat anywhere near them. I think she said though that there's some sort of narrow beach on the biggest one."

"I can't see anything, can you?"

"No, it faces the sea. You can only see it if you go round by boat from the plantation."

I looked at my watch. "It's only a quarter to three. Let's carry on to that point over there," I said.

"Yes, let's. Then we can go back through the bean fields."

We scrambled down a path that ran along the edge of the cliff for about fifty yards, until our way was blocked by a wall. There, through a wire-mesh screen, we watched the waves plane to placate the coming tide.

MAPS

"Seconds turned into minutes, minutes into hours; the hours became divisions—morning, afternoon, night. These became days, days drifted into weeks, weeks into months. Then everything became segmented once more—days again. Such was our jungle existence until the monsoons came" (begins with a hippopotamus relaxing in the shade, ends with the sequined Infanta positive against her governess on a woolly, diamond-shaped rug)

We rode on for about six miles, and then stopped for a rest, as Georges, Lili and myself were feeling rather stiff. A quarter of an hour later we started off again, but now we had to take to the road for quite a distance, as the brilliance of the vegetation showed that the ground had developed into a quagmire.

"That's the trouble with riding a hippopotamus around

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these parts," Georges laughed, lighting a cigarette. "You never know when you're going to come across a swamp, and when you do there's nothing for it but, yep, you've got it, go the whole way around. The WHOLE way."

"Oh no," I said. "And this looks endless."

"Yes, well of course this is a particularly swampy part of the jungle," Georges explained. "The river runs down here and joins the sea just north of the plantation. Lili, have you got that map of ours with you? Then I can show you just how exactly it runs."

Lili looked nonplussed.

"I'm awfully sorry," she stammered back. "I'm afraid I've left it behind. I put it under the crumb-tray on the kitchen table so that we wouldn't forget it, and then in the rush of getting off this morning I must have forgotten it."

. . . . . .

. . . . . woman's body under garment brushed against various kinds of flame-colored flowers (petals of checked pattern)—white when gone in, emerges the color of its juice. The black pills (seeds) crushed underfoot exhude a ring of pungent ash (refined, thin, in small particles—more polka dots than the cream ones on her dress) and coat her heels in a resinous gum which smells of garlic. "Why don't you buy shoes with rubber soles and then you wouldn't make a noise as you went along?" Georges cried after her. But she pretended not to have heard, running even faster (the wind unhooked her pinnable material) up the path leading to the tough neighbourhood beyond; there at least, she thought, people were living lives as secretly productive as worms under lawns.

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"Too bad. Too bad and too late," Georges said when she had gone.

"Yes. Yes, too bad," I replied, then turned and made my way back into the jungle.

RECONSTRUCTION

. . . . . .
. . . . . .flattered by analogy to the sun to accept a temporary (Summer) job emptying bins full of melons rotting in their husks (they kept trying pieces to see if they would fit the rind).

also the brush fans out to stencil it in (—it, the fruit pattern).

dreaming (for them the lines of the atlas only limited the horizon) the means by which a rolled newspaper becomes a trumpet.

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Dick Gallup

Like the Stars

Like the stars
I've been wandering alot

A paper chair

The juice begins at home
And runs uphill toward you
Clanking away into the mill
Carrying a clump of broccoli
My favorite vegetable

Looking at the ripples on the backs of folks
Huddled around their mobile homes
I expect life to be like music

I am bone dry
Bone dry

Sometimes I think you
Are my favorite vegetable

From the edge of the galaxy
I puke on the tiny classical voice
Of Mozart

Little man
On the sidewalk

Excuse me Mr. Mozart
I was aiming for the Crab Nebula

With an Au Pair girl on your arm
A little garden in your ear

We have good heads you and I
Though dark rivulets of despair
Crinkle the grey matter
And you are not Mozart

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The mini-lamp swings through the Earth's core
A twisted
  bent personality run by an insane conscience
    Balloon night
Underneath a dark cloud of balloons

Really my heart is a sponge
Aching for the sea (burp) water
To fill it up with Premium Girls
Who all have a flooding problem.

Terror, death, murder, illness, poverty and rain
Are what bothers me when I have the time
Beans for tonight peas for tomorrow

1968

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Chris Peterson

New York

So the tape bled and seemed amazed at the funniness
Then curled a while and slept under the whirr
The cameras flashed and the donut flashed and sang
"Won't You be my Puppynut?" and the frosty grass
(From the old frozen spinach) begged to be included
In tomorrow, but tomorrow's knock on the door
Was my own knock...

We moved from Brooklyn in 1956, at 40 miles per hour

You are an acre, but I am in donut land:
This is the city
Around a corner
Where it's easy to be here
& You and I are in another room together
In Finger Street

The hog was necking on the old divan.

So they made room for all the bricks and stones
When they moved to the country. It was part of
America's expansion.
Brick is my body and jacket and tie. Brick is my
Old age benefit plan. Brick is my daily life and
Conception. Brick is my resumption and my snorkel.
So he took his fingers off the radiator and
Cast them into the mountains, where they tumbled
Like packages. At night, we watched the hollow plate
At the back of his head, that glowed like a blue band.

My plate hollowed
The armor dented
The frosty tin was my hammer
The oilsoaked brick was my cloth
Now I live in the office, where
They are bargaining for my quilt,
But the fist is my only comfort.

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Jim Brodey

Go to Sleep

for Lee Crabtree

"Have alot of folks over for dinner and walk"
Thus spoke Gertrude Stein bellyaching about Manhood.

Fashionable windiness to gear sworn statements into hungry keys
For the rush of flesh colored Lifetime to gargle

Paris 1920 was an airplane burning holes through coupons & premiums
Which concealed great red underwear beneath radiance of disinfecting prose

Debts of consciousness that wore us down,
Turning rough drafts into phosphorescent booklets the silence recommends.

Experience giving tender evidence to ever widening instant
Stood atop cranky gauntlet in most remote Farm Country

Brought home puking to continue producing works that blame & Hurt
None of those who regularly bathe in spirit physique upon Blackness

Or were ever smitten with an uncorruptible urge to die as a child
Risen anew in Manhood born to accredit the night before the year 1900.

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Richard Brautigan

The San Francisco Weather Report

Gee, You're so Beautiful That It's Starting to Rain

Oh, Marcia,
I Want your long blonde beauty
to be taught in high school,
so kids will learn that God
lives like music in the skin
and sounds like a sunshine harpsichord.
I want high school report cards
to look like this:

Playing with Gentle Glass Things
A

Computer Magic
A

Writing Letters to Those You Love
A

Finding out about Fish
A

Marcia's Long Blonde Beauty
A+!

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Jim Carroll

Traffic

I was a young pilot in World War I, remember?
do you know the feeling of an airplane crashing the water's edge?

we've just traveled 600 miles, and the only person
we know is sleeping under the wet almond tree.

there is nothing left but this meadow which smells of blood,
an infant has escaped from the orphanage long enough to be crushed
various birds admit their secret hate for us
and the canoe makes way through the cave for the abandoned North.

these fields open gently...
and the soft flowers are radiated within.

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Notes from the Century Before

Edward Hoagland

During the summer of 1966 I traveled in northern British Columbia for several months, talking to perhaps eighty old-timers—trappers, prospectors, riverboat men, Tahltan and Tsimshian Indians. Telegraph Creek, a central village, is eight hundred miles north of Vancouver but still well short of the Yukon border, and is east of Juneau, Alaska, by two hundred miles. There are few roads; transportation is by bush plane. Altogether, the area I concerned myself with contains as much land as three Ohios, and yet it has only three towns, each with about one hundred and fifty people, mostly Indians. It is lushly forested and drained by the Stikine and Skeena Rivers. Some of the last great game concentrations in the world are there. The selections which follow are from my journal.

Bright and early we drove south on Kinaskan Lake on the unfinished road. Parking by a strange message box, Bob commenced to honk. The opposite shore was too far for us to see anything.

A speck appeared, growing slowly. "Two rifle shots is the signal. I don't usually come for a horn, you know," said Steele Hyland. He was laughing but not ordinarily joking. "There's going to be a lot of horns on this road in another year or two." He glanced me over and decided he'd relieve Bob of me and take me across. As we got out on the water, he said when he staked his land fifteen years ago the road had not been laid out to follow the Iskut up to its head but, instead, to cross the mountains by Raspberry Pass. Anyway, a snooper would need field glasses to pick out his place and the river bars him even to

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somebody trying to go round the lake on foot through the bush. Kinaskan, as a matter of fact, means Boy-crossing-on-a-raft.

Hyland is the surviving Hyland, as Roy Callbreath is the surviving Callbreath on the upper Stikine. He's a jocose, big-faced, meat-faced man in his ageless fifties with a Fire Warden's button pinned on his chest, incongruously, since the valley still is empty of people, and blue eyes and a boisterous boy's mouth. Besides running a store and restaurant-hotel in Telegraph Creek, his family in the early years of the century operated trading posts on the Spatsizi River, on Dease Lake, in the Cassiar country, and on the Liard River at Lower Post, which is one of the few historic settlements on the Alaska Highway. The Hyland River empties into the Liard nearby. Steele's grandfather, having shipped around Cape Horn from Ontario in the 1890's, was prospecting with seven other men on Scurvy Creek, as it was named afterwards, which feeds into the Hyland. They'd been eating salt pork for months (even fresh meat will help combat scurvy), and they were all down and dying of the disease, when some Indians happened by and brewed up a pot of juniper tea for them. Five of the party refused to drink, saying it was Indian medicine, but Grandfather Hyland and two of his friends drank it and lived. On their stumbling, hallucinatory trip out, he picked up a chunk of gold ore which prospectors have been searching the river to match ever since. He himself never went back. He became a trader, buying the pressed bales of fur that just fit a canoe, opening up one or two areas before Hudson's Bay. He had two sons who expanded the business. Besides packing regularly on the various trails, competing with the Callbreaths and others, they used to run fantastic, meandering, sixty-day hunts for rich men at a hundred dollars per person per day, providing a splendid assortment of horses and a crew of wranglers and guides and cooks. The riverboat would return to Wrangell piled with skins. They had two ranches for wintering their horses, one on the Spatsizi at Hyland Post and the other up at Hyland Lake, which is along the Teslin, close to the boundary of the Yukon. Like Callbreath, Steele Hyland

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abandoned horse-keeping right away when his father died, though he kept the store until four years ago and remained the presiding intelligence of Telegraph Creek. As a historian he's encyclopaedic, and he isn't chary of sharing out what he knows. He says the boys grew up to be either hunters or mechanics, usually mechanics, as he did. Then their children, moderate, modern youngsters, have left altogether. He's childless, but of John Creyke's 14 children, only one boy has turned into a consummate woodsman like his father, and of Callbreath's 8, only Edwin, the captain of the *Judith Ann*, stayed in the north at all. So the people changed faster than the country.

Obviously, one trouble was that nobody else came in. Whatever was being done well finally was overdone. The farmer, with no newcomers to sell his produce to, went on clearing more land and building additional barns and sheds, raising the roofs in inexplicable, queer peaks and quirky hexagonals that got almost heroically high. Except for scattered, shallow-snow valleys, it wasn't a proper ranching area. The few wild horses that are left on the deserted old sites could be easily caught in the winter if anyone cared. Nowadays the one outstanding horse man is an 88-year-old fellow called Skook Davidson who still lives alone in the Ketchika Valley, which is way east of here. He arrived with the first surveyors, who traversed through from Fort Ware to Lower Post in 1941. He was their packer, and when they gave him the horses at the end of the trip, he went back up the newly explored valley, where he's stayed ever since. He's got too many horses to count now, unbroken, unfenced, no one to sell them to. He's a cranky old man, crippled up with arthritis, cussing into his radio, who gives a report on his wolves instead of his weather, and throws the cork into the creek when he opens a bottle of whisky so there won't be a way of stopping the fun. In his time, he's raised several waifs to be first-rate wranglers, but they don't make boys any more who can walk in there, Hyland says.

Hyland, too, is an extremist of the old school. If he hasn't heptagonal barns or too many loose horses to count, he does

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his hauling by means of a quaint midget Caterpillar manufactured in 1922. He's built a large work shed equipped with sanders and drills and saws—a wall floor-to-ceiling with tools; must be a thousand tools. One side of the shed is for working in metal and one is for working with wood. At the moment he's constructing a fourteen-foot motorized scow for freighting, although he already has a scow bigger than that and seven boats. He has a 5000 watt power plant, when 400 watts would do for lighting the house. He has his own sawmill, with a planer and shingle-maker, and two transmitting radios, and all kinds of extra, unexplained huts. Four of them are living cabins, piped for propane and piped for stove oil, each with a tin roof that slides the snow off. Yet this is a lake where you can catch sixty fish in an hour on a barbless hook and the horizon of mountains around are all still unnamed. Stone sheep browse in plain view on the north flank and goats in plain view on the south.

His wife's name is Lou. He calls her Girl. They have a constant flirtation going on with more to-and-fro fooling than teasing. She's a tall, playful, clever, skinny person who's always pretending to be serious. They met on the riverboat when she was coming to Telegraph Creek to clerk in the Hudson's Bay store during the manpower shortage in World War II. Six months later the Government Agent married them and the whole town was at the reception. The miners gave them a deerskin poke with $200 in it. Like Mrs. Adrian of "The Adrians, pop. 4," she's another extraordinarily soft-natured, feminine, even winsome woman, moving about pleasurably. The boat that's reserved for her itself seems a boat of a different color and style which the rest of the boats center around. She has a wonderfully light-filled, uncluttered house with just a handful of pieces of furniture that belong: a table for two to eat at by the window and a counter in front of the stove with stools for a crowd. None of it is new, just the house. She has a bird-feeder where she puts the leftover pancakes, and a greenhouse for starting the vegetables in the spring. Telegraph Creek, being two thousand feet lower, is a month ahead of Eddontenajon and Kinaskan and is freak-

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ishly snowless anyway, so that she remembers when the boys in town went out to trap they'd need to be trucked to the top of the schoolhouse hill before there was snow for the sleds to run on. She has a victrola and records and mobiles outside that chink in the wind. The lake pours reflected light into the living room, and she boils cookie balls of rolled oats, margarine, marmalade, vanilla, brown sugar, and peanut butter, and dashes off letters and letters, like someone else phoning their friends. She sometimes gets tired of using snowshoes, but in the warm months when she's in the greenhouse, hummingbirds heedlessly hover next to her face, intoxicated by the profusion of smells. In April just as the ice goes out, a couple of hundred swans will splash down for a three-week tenure, Whistlers the height of a man. They give a musical wow-wow call and clamor and whoosh overhead in a waving V at twice the speed of a car.

Her husband and she take enough pains to tell me their life isn't lonely to prove that occasionally it must be. Naturally it must be, and, more still, to have every visitor assume that it is must be boring. They draw their income during the bright weeks of summer when fishermen fly in and survey geographers rent tenting space and a helicopter pad. Another business is refueling bush planes, which have to make at least one stop in crossing these enormous distances: this is the one stop. "Steele fills the plane and I fill the pilot." Also they measure the level of the lake at its outlet for the Water Resources Board, which brings in $20 a month, and radio daily weather accounts to the bush airlines. In the winter planes land for fuel on skis or land for a party, a half dozen friends surprising them with saki and corned caribou and pastries and fresh greens and fruit. New Year's Eve, everybody on their frequency tunes in, including cussing Skook, and exchanges good wishes and drinks together. Once a wolverine got in the house, and once a grizzly, which bashed everything frightfully. They were away and the house was in his spring migratory route, but, unlike the sort of vandalism that is done by humans, the terror, the phantasmagoric element, was strictly his. He found himself in a House of Mirrors, surrounded by

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storming bears that ripped his paws worse with every window he socked. Lou's reaction when she came back was to fix cardboard cut-outs of his red tracks before she began bleaching the floor.

It's very busy and civilized. She's up at six-thirty. Boyish the way Steele is, he's likely to sleep as late as she lets him, but then is all over the property, repairing equipment, projecting his plans. She keeps to their radio-report schedule with an alarm clock—"Roger, Roger. Negative, Negative." They drink tea a couple of times in leisurely fashion and wine before supper. They have a great deal to do if they want to do it but nothing that must be done. A life like this is either blithely continuous, regulating itself by its satisfactions, or else is insufferable from the start. And it's all words. There isn't a sound to interrupt, only each other's conversing. There isn't another sound. They pun and heckle, they listen for trip springs and hold each other to everything said. The names "Wrig" and Steele are names you'd expect to hear a wife say on a tennis club terrace. Though the Hylands' marriage is frozen at a stage of romance where it mightn't be if they had children, there is no tinny ring to the fondness, no wistful clinging, and they're the people I've felt the most comfortable staying with.

They're like seafarers, the exclusive interest they have in their setting. The reading material, both magazines and books, concerns nothing else. The decorations are heads of game, pictures of scenery, or mineral specimens. It's amusing to tell Steele about Samos, the Greek island I was on last year, which is two-and-a-half times as long as this lake. The population is something like 40,000, down from 60,000 before the war, and the island has been occupied three thousand years. Yet the end facing Athens is regarded as scarcely explored. A ship-shaped mountain rises spiritedly, with a lift at its bow and stern, and nobody knows its entire extent, nobody's been from end to end. Bandits have lived out their lives in its pockets and spurs. It's full of lost meadows, secret wells, and honeybee hives, and brigands' caves with men's bones mouldering on the floor—incontrovertibly a *wild* place. He can't

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believe his ears. "Why didn't they go in and clean them out?"

We sat up late last night in the watery illumination. The sun merely feinted at going down, although in the morning the air was near frost. He says he has five feet of snow on the ground in January. Often a Chinook wind will blow and melt most of it late in February, before the storms renew again, continuing into April. The March stuff packs down and the wolves emerge from the timber and travel the lakes, two or three families together. Last winter a plane crashed on Dease Lake while chasing some. He says the most skillful trappers were the Indians but that many of the whites carried in larger totals of fur because they were single-minded about it and were trying to raise a stake to get out of the country. The dog teams were small single-file teams because of the timber, not fan-shaped as they were in the Barren Grounds, but a man like Creyke who had a phenomenally long trapline or Willie Campbell, running the mail, kept a crack group of dogs. At Christmas the Hudson's Bay man would tap the bottom of the barrel of rum he kept for liquoring the Indians at trading time and get a punchy, thick, holiday syrup, and deep in the bush, on the Taku, the boys who'd stayed out to trap would visit a relic Russian fort and dress in the uniforms and swords they found and party around a cast-brass cannon so big that although the fort has since been rediscovered, nobody has taken the cannon yet. The Mad Trapper of Rat River raced through the Stikine country one year, pursued by the Mounties, on to the Liard, to Old Crow in the Yukon, and into the Northwest Territories. Other than him and Gunanoot, the closest they came to having an outlaw was the Boston Burglar, who wasn't a burglar at all, only a gunsmith, retired, a nice fellow, a prospector, found dead on the trail from the Turnagain River at last.

Hyland's favorite epithet is Fairy and he calls the Indian who sometimes works for him Lover Boy. He's a freewheeler. The problem is not getting answers but thinking up questions for him. Who was the last back-packing prospector? The last back-packing prospector was an American who stepped off the riverboat quite recently, set off right away into

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the bush, walked for two weeks, and climbed the mountain that he had picked out during the winter from studying his maps. There in a basin under the peak was a helicopter camp, with the candy wrappers and frozen food cartons and ginger ale cans lying around. Hyland, having left Telegraph Creek, has cut himself off from the inevitable melancholy of such incidents and the steady drip-drip of the deaths in town. He's here where it's new, listening for planes for his bread and butter. But the promptitude of his answers as to what Ah Clem was like or Callbreath, Senior and the fact that, for some modest reason, he's eschewed diaries as well as horses is sad.

We had tea, celery, potatoes, and roast moose for lunch. The moose I assumed to be leg of lamb. Steaks for supper, a tender, coarse-grained meat, beefy except for a subtle sweetness to it, rather like home-brew beer as compared to the commercial cans. Hyland shoots moose on his lawn. He doesn't go hunting for them. He points to a bluff where the Indians camped when they passed Kinaskan. They'd sit chipping arrowheads out of obsidian, get a view of the game, and let the breeze keep the mosquitoes away.

The Hylands, who are childless, have Cliff Adams as a probable heir. He is a deliberate young man with two kids and a black-haired mouse of a wife—mouse meaning dodgy and shy. They're living just now in a one-room cabin crammed to the rafters with groceries and gear, the trunks, their clothing, his saddles. He's building a four-room house of yellow peeled logs chinked with oakum, which he twists in ropes and covers with stripping. The floor is of planking covered with tarpaper and plywood. The roof is shingles, tarpaper, and planks. To keep the logs looking light inside the house, he will brush on a little white paint, wiping it off immediately with the other hand. The cost he thinks will add up to $150, for the oakum, tarpaper, plywood and nails. He's to open the new hunting territory allotted to Hyland, which has never before been professionally hunted and hardly ever been hunted at all. It's a sea of snowfields and rain-forest jungle, absolutely trailless except for the meager remains of

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the Telegraph Trail. It extends east from here to the head of the Nass and south to the Unuk, like Delaware and Rhode Island combined, and it's a thicket of peaks, like a class holding up their hands. So we laugh.

He's the first individual my own age whom I've paid much attention to. There was one in Telegraph Creek with an expanse of territory stretching north from the Stikine clear to the Inklin River, but he was so lackadaisical and limp I haven't mentioned him. The refrain of the older people is that they don't make 'em like they used to, when of course it's more that the energies of the age are directed elsewhere. But it is puzzling to find this superbly rigorous country so empty, so unattempted, and yet not be able to pick up a newspaper without reading about a man who has just sailed a seven-foot sailboat across the Atlantic, or rowed across with a friend. I remember once in Wyoming meeting a boy like John Ellis, who took me upriver from Wrangell to Government Island to fetch the bear skin. He was also in his late teens, born on the spot, not a proselyte from the East who had wanted to pioneer, and an orphan, supporting himself very well now, in his case as a plumber, after some earlier privations. He worked mainly in order to stake himself to solo trips into the mountains which lasted for weeks on end, and, although he seemed to be the only person left in Wyoming who still did that kind of thing, there was a hunger and passion to it, as in Ellis' trips, which you don't hear of from the McPhees or from A. J. Marion or the rest in Telegraph Creek, all of whom first arrived on the Stikine like young space engineers, in gaiety and glee. You wonder what the result will be when the hungerers are settled snugly and married and don't any longer feel such a sting. On Samos last year I knew a man who was building a sailboat with a Greek helper that he planned to sail around the world. He wasn't like either Ellis or the McPhees. He was an ornery, touchy South African, not as attractive as his ambitions, who had already traveled in Indonesia and Indo-China a considerable while and whose wife had just died after suffering from leukemia for thirteen years.

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Cliff is in his early thirties, compactly built, and even more compact in speech. He has a focused, pinched, close-mouthed face, a likable hook to his nose and a likable nod, a low, choked voice with the beguiling mid-B.C. accent, and usually he looks to one side if he does open his mouth. He croaks the words out. He's a cowboy who stopped being a cowboy and moved up here to be in on what's underway: for no stranger reason. He's like the cheerful, bush-bearded throwback in Hazelton who offered to walk me to Telegraph Creek and whose hobby was taking honeymoon couples into the woods on a hunting trip and, after shooting a bear for them, hanging it up alongside their bunk so they could hear the blood hit the floor, except that he's gentle, not crude. He's in the old style. My technique with most of these people, if I've had one, has been to keep still. Not being as used to company and not being as used to silence as I, they talk in a hastening rush, in nervous, then pleased soliloquies. Cliff rejoices in stillness, though. He needs to be nudged into an embellishment, one question quick on the heels of another one.

We talk about game, since he's among the best guides. He watched the sheep soldier through the winter on a wind-blown ridge above the lake, nit-sized figures in file. It can be sixty below, but the essential is that they can get at the grass. The goats, though they climb higher in the summer, often go lower in the winter, trying to locate a cave. The next July you'll stumble on it, mattressed with molted hair and sprinkled with the bones of the kids that died, like a wolf's cave except for the rumpy, antelope smell. Sheep have a special zest and therefore a majesty. They don't occur commonly and when they take flight they take flight for that day and maybe the next. Goats seem to feel more secure. They don't bolt when they first see a hunter, but stand and look back before slowly climbing. Caribou, too, are inquisitive. They will join a pack train, or will continue to mill around even after one in the herd has been shot. Sociable, scatter-brained, they're simpler to hunt than the moody moose, where they haven't already been decimated. In fact, caribou are so ingenuous that if they're starting to run away and you hold up your hand,

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often they'll stop to investigate why. In snowstorms they come down to an evergreen forest for shelter and eat the lichens hanging from the trees and paw underfoot for the moss. He says he has heard that moose followed the white man into this Stikine country on the tramped trails. Since they eat willows instead of lichen, they thrive in a burnt-over forest which grows up deciduous afterwards or on land partly cleared and abandoned. Coyotes were another immigrant, coming in with the pack trains. Now they're as frequent as wolves, but apparently it was too tough a wilderness for them in the beginning. In the heavy snow, they stick under the heaviest tree cover and look awfully thin when you see them.

He says he and a friend woke up a black bear in the middle of winter one time and ate him. Grizzlies may do the same thing during a warm spell, since they don't hibernate as uninterruptedly, and then spend the last piece of the winter in the victim's own den. Bear meat is likely to be worm-ridden, however, particularly from a grizzly, who eats so much carrion. The bear population is splotched about according to where the marmots are and the various cycles of fish and berries. When a grizzly kills an animal of some size, he may bury it under a mound of debris and lie on the mound until his next meal, which makes a bad moment to walk up on him. The rutting season in the early summer can also be bad, and the sows, as they are called, attack on occasion when accompanied by cubs, at least the first year. After that, although the cubs keep on their mamma's trail, she gets bored with them and, as at another time, will almost invariably run from a human, whether or not she has ever been hunted. Generally, a bear who is shot runs downhill. In an area like this, not knowing of the existence of man, he doesn't start looking for one but runs for his life as if he'd been hit by a bolt of lightning. If the hunter has shown himself, naturally sometimes that's different. Grizzlies are not clanking, devilish machines, they are living creatures. They may flee from a man on a given day and not flee the next; they may challenge him at the top of the hill and not at the bottom, or chase him and then unaccountably break off the chase. People who have been

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attacked on a treeless mountainside have escaped by jumping down a short cliff or by lighting a fire in the grass at their feet or by yelling and fighting bravely with a stick in their hands, as against a Cyclops, or by taking a badgering blow or two and playing dead. Grizzlies, like the French, have the merit of being just as hard on their own race as on foreigners. They are solitaries, they are property-owners, and they are virtuosos. In the ordinary course of events, the more bellicose strains have been eliminated—great bears such as Lewis and Clark describe who attacked on sight. Nevertheless, they rear up to see who they are dealing with and to show themselves, a habit easily misread. In their abhorrence of man they are uniquely consistent. They withdraw from a mountain slope when he moves into the valley below even if no shots are fired. From miles off, the racket and smoke are enough. They are the first animals to leave and they leave with less fear than any of the others. As they've been doing this now for such a long while, the distaste must have become very strong.

* * *

A moist day. I can start a fire with the tan piece of paper from inside a shirt which has been to a Chinese laundry. Tomorrow's wood is stowed in the oven to dry.

Am with Henderson once again. Tonight we drove down the Iskut, down the series of quite disparate valleys it has cut, to the end of the road construction so far. The lakes strung together got much smaller and the river got a little bit larger. The mountains shrunk down to formless hills and relaxed from their duties of walling. Except that it was wet and glistening, it became like the Sioux country of the Dakotas, full of nooks and porpoising little ridges and unexpected developments, washes a Sioux might ride out of at a distance of thirty-five yards. There were rudimentary bridges over thrashing creeks with gravel bottoms. Since the sun had come out, some of the hills were vividly green while their neighbors were still white with rain. Then the hills bulged and heightened to mountains, straightening into an orderly and imposing range on either side. The valley grew fine and

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broad and they gained a posh, lofty dignity. Instead of being cupped serviceably for catching the rains like the headwaters mountains at Eddontenajon, they were ranked as along a boulevard, where the gathered water sped on its way. The forest itself grew taller, encompassing and vast. The low intervals of brush, the marshes, the pea vine openings and meadows were stopped up. It was a lightless, impenetrable forest; it was the prototype forest, which presents a mad seanet of heaped, angular, tree-sized sticks as its face. You don't think of going in. You look at it, turning your body sideways on the seat. The Iskut isn't spraddled into sloughs and jungle islands until nearly the end, so that it doesn't upstage its valley like the Stikine does, and instead of impressing a traveler as being the most voluminous tributary of the Stikine, it seems as demure and functional as one of its own tributary rivers would be. But the valley has high-flown dimensions that I hadn't seen since the train trip down the Skeena, very bannery and grand.

I went to find a maintenance man named Armel Philippon, who walked over the trail from Hazelton in 1934 and who has been known for it ever since.He has his own trailer and stays through the winter, snowed in, as watchman for the machinery. Last year his wife and he used to snowshoe six miles to Cliff Adams' house and back for a visit every couple of weeks, but next time the camp will be thirty miles further on, all snow, and probably they won't even have a radio. He's another fellow who came into the country looking for gold originally. It seems that everybody did. He was 23, it was the Depression, and this was the blithe approach to the Depression. He had a companion about ten years older, a carpenter, who generally helped him along and saved his life once, when he fell off a footlog into the Blackwater River and was being drowned by his pack as he hung onto a branch from the log, until his partner lifted it off. They had driven from Vancouver to Hazelton in the first part of May in a Model T Ford. Having no money, they traded the car to the Hudson's Bay manager for $35 worth of supplies, and set out

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with 50-pound packs of stuff, most of which they soon threw away. They kept just the food, their two blankets, and the two rifles, and they ran out of food long before they were done. Philippon was a city boy, so everything seemed touch-and-go to him, rushing along for six weeks—the benignity of the weather (they hadn't a tent; usually they simply rolled in their blankets under a tree to sleep), the snow passes which always let them down into a warmer climate again before nightfall, the business of throwing a tree down and scaling their way across a cannonading river as if they were steeplejacks climbing giddily. Not only did they scoot through the gauntlet of grizzlies safely, they never saw one. They never encountered any game except for a few porcupines and grouse that they bagged for the pot with a .22. They met no other transients, either, and by that day and age were treated rather as curiosities by the telegraph men. Naturally they'd hoped to prospect as well as hunt successfully while they went along, poking into side valleys where nobody had turned off before. They'd hoped to find at least a souvenir nugget or two, and instead it was the best they could do to keep making headway on the main trail. If they saw goats up above on a ridge they hadn't the energy to go after them. They were soon begging food from the linemen, gentlemen who were generous enough but were nearly out of supplies themselves, since June was the month when the pack train arrived. The rivers were dangerously high and the timing was bad for mosquitoes, too. With no repellent, mosquitoes were the worst hardship. When the trail was easy to follow, sometimes they traveled at night in the chill, or paralleled the trail to escape them, up in the snow. The Nass was the ruggedest going, a tangled swamp valley overlaid with windfalls and braided with streams and bogs, a million mosquitoes, the trail an illegible mush. He said they liked the linemen without exception and that they were never allowed to starve. It was just that between these Samaritan cabins a lot of their meals would amount to small bites of hardtack prolonged, each nibble made into a mouthful. Having tea in the trailer, he got hungry remembering and went to the kitchen for something to eat. Beyond Ninth Cabin

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they were lost for two days after taking the wrong trail, so their hungriest time was then. But they slept well and, indeed, by the end of the trip he had gained weight from the exercise and fresh air. Some of the best country they saw was in crossing the uplands of Sansixmor and Yaza Creeks and Slow-maldo. Mountain, and the best and prettiest stretch of the whole was when they doodled down Raspberry Creek, at the last, after crossing the watershed that separates the Iskut and Stikine.

Arriving in Telegraph Creek, they felt proud and "saved" —in good shape but thoroughly awed. They camped on the bank, resting for two or three days. The townspeople brought them salmon to eat. They were still broke, needless to say, and since they had a tremendous momentum, they hiked on ninety more miles to the gold-panning area north of Dease Lake. The carpenter didn't remain, but, except for periods in Vancouver to marry and to see his children through school, Dease Lake was Philippon's home. There was plenty of company—somebody working on every creek. He became the veteran instead of the greenest. He's a slim, hardy man with a lean, gazing face, dressed in khaki. He has one of those slight god-like smiles that you see on an old figurine, and, although his eyes are hollowed, it's a foxy, amused, humane face. It's a face you would want on your jury. Slim as it is, it opens as expressive and rich as a rich man's purse. His wife looks like an ordinary woman, like a nursing-home nurse. She's stout and short. The trailer is any Los Angeles trailer. As far as one can tell casually, she hasn't been marked by the life they have had, just as he hasn't been soured or crabbed in some manner because he didn't strike gold: quite the reverse. He's the most serene man I've met here. He's marked with the ebullience of the search.

I asked a clumsy question. I asked if any of the telegraph men had gone nuts from the solitude, moving my finger beside my ear. For a minute he was a little disdainful. What I should have asked is why there aren't any hillbillies on the Stikine. I've yet to find a hillbilly, although Hazelton had a number of them—benighted, pale, wax-featured creatures

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from the Dust Bowl who peeked round their doorframes. They hamstrung their goats to keep them from straying or tied one on each running board when they went on a trip for the children to suckle from. Isolation breeds hillbillies but solitude doesn't. Solitude on a scale like this singes and sears. It makes for rapt faces like Philippon's and the McPhees' and for a fire-walker's ambling aplomb.

Going home, we saw a wolf wandering along. The first people who settle a valley discover that the animals are not especially nocturnal. The noon heat, not the daylight, is what they avoid. Bears and deer are grazing in the back pasture by five o'clock. Roadbuilders also find the wildlife begins by enjoying the benefits of the road. It was a gray, tall, preoccupied, lost-looking beast with long legs, all of its bulk in its shoulders and head and that mostly shag. It was within forty yards, sniffing, glancing about as if confused by a scent, though not really intrigued. It was slow to notice us and it was a jittery, gloomy figure. Very rarely before, in the Mediterranean countries, I've seen such an harassed animal—a dog who was too big ever to be given or to forage enough food, who hadn't the smarmy quality of the other dogs, no fawning, no sympathy to offer, who was helplessly swift and perpetually gnawed and only too knowing and insightful. As soon as the wolf did notice us, though, it looked more directly at us than a dog. Its stance was suddenly galvanized, straighter than a dog's, rather like a phantom's, too alert to be true. When we got out of the truck, it left the road and sat down in the scrub a short ways off and looked in the other direction, puzzling distractedly over whatever it had been puzzling about before. For us, a loudspeaker might have been broadcasting twelve-tone music, because this was a rhythm different from ours.

It's the fourth wolf I've seen. The last time the wolf was a two-year-old female on the Clearwater River in eastern British Columbia, who was shot at night on a jeep road because headlights were new to her. She kept struggling up on her elbows to face the rifles, and we ducked round our fenders as if she had a rifle herself and were shooting back. Her fur was

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in silver-fox shades and her head was larger than life. I stared at it the next day while she was being skinned. She had grim, snapping eyes set at a spellbinding slant, and a mouth like a bomber's undercarriage—like the bomb bay doors. At the zoo you can watch wolves mouthing their meat like a cobbler turning a shoe in his hands or a tailor handling a bundle of clothes. Oversized as it is, the mouth can be used as a pair of hands. Wolves' legs are long because they churn for a hundred-and-fifty miles in a line and then a hundred-and-fifty more miles in another line and then a hundred-and-fifty more miles, all their lives. Their shoulders are large because they fight with their shoulders. And their heads are large to contain their mouths, which are both hands and mouths. Their eyes are fixed in a Mongol slant to evade being bitten. Nobody born nowadays will see a wild wolf. Wolves are an epitome. One keeps count because they are so exceptional a glimpse. They brush by a settlement in their journeying and get shot because obviously it isn't possible any more to gallop a hundred-and-fifty miles and not brush up against a settlement. Not being as secretive and restrictive in their sorties as a mountain lion, they eat whatever is the right size and discloses itself. Nor are they all gloom and jitters. They present personalities so versatile that at some point they become a target for that reason too. The first wolves I saw were up on a rise playing like seals, arfing, nosing. Usually when they are sighted they are loping as trimly along as if they'd just loped around the world. It was a pastime of the old-timers to trace the back trail of a family of wolves during a snowstorm for some brief part of the distance to judge by the snow that was filling their prints how fast they'd been going.

* * *

Every day while I've been here a government plane has flown overhead enroute to photograph new territory. It's a brave-looking plane in the fog and, since it's based at Steele Hyland's place, it has already crossed a lot of stiff country. Airplanes, along with the other advances, have made mapping easier than naming nowadays, however. Most of the features

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around the Stikine haven't found names as yet. Mountains of 8000 feet are marked by a dot and some altitude numerals, or the names are bookish and stilted—Oxide Peak, Lunar Creek. The surveyors of forty years ago did much better because they were actually on the spot. Being men of good intentions, they were glad to incorporate Indian names on their maps when they knew the names or to commemorate a pair of white prospectors who were said to have wintered nearby in the 1880's—Harrymel Creek. Spatsizi means Red Goat, because the mountain goats rolled in the scree on the red sandstone bluffs overlooking the river until they turned red. Cold Fish Lake, according to Mr. Walker, had a tongue-twisting Indian name meaning High-cold-water-lake-where-there-are-fish. Sometimes the name was transcribed wrong, whether purposely or not, as in the case of the Toodoggone River, which instead of a meaning like "Tough-slogging" was really called Two-dogs-gone River, the Indians at Eddontenajon say. Two dogs that somebody needed had run away there. Nipple Mountain became Knipple mountain back in Victoria, a minor change. But it's an exceedingly accidental process, the naming of creeks and land forms. The name they end up with is only the last of a series of names. If no Indian accompanied the mapper, or if he wasn't unusually expressive, all of the native names slipped through the sieve and were lost right then and there. Most of them were anyway, and so were the ones bestowed by the first sourdough in his gaiety to memorialize frights he had had—the freak storms, the goggly phantasmagorias he had seen, the encounter with a migrating horde of snowshoe hares, the fossil rhinoceros found, the bear cub who toddled ahead of him on the trail wearing a red baseball cap on its head (an hallucination told me). At least the mapper spoke the same language as he, but by the time the mapper appeared the fellow was already home in Wichita, deaf and old. Instead of his memories, we are left with a name from across the coffeepot—Gil Peak—or perhaps, if the mapper was imaginative, a mule's name—Big One-eyed Molly.

Rick and I rode into the bush this morning looking for a horse named Ace. The terrain is potted with grassy bowls an

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acre in size and fifty feet deep, and so many trees are laid on the ground in between that we needed to weave in 9's and 8's. We all reconnoitered downriver by boat in the afternoon, stopping and checking the clumps of footprints that we saw on the bank: always moose. It can't be repeated too often how incredibly new this river is. It might be compared to the Housatonic in size, but it simply isn't the Housatonic. It's stiff, bristly and resistant. The colors are primary colors. Everything is big and crude—the high sand cuts, the slivery, drift-piled islands, the blustery stands of spruce on the shore. The red sand cuts avalanche into the river as the river eats in. They get redder and the river gets redder. Demurely the Ross River joins, green from the glaciers it drains, and the waters hesitantly mix. There are hidden bars which the water accelerates toward. Hummocks of sliding water protrude. Snags snout upwards like alligators, muzzled in other debris. Morgan picks the middle, picks the left side, standing up, cutting the motor to neutral to float over a riffle. A gravel creek comes in, which I call Gray Creek. The river swings on and on between scenes so concise and complete that they seem prepared. We've emerged from coasting in front of the mountains to a country of broken plateaus with willow flats and hilly forest. As spectators, we continue smoothly, inevitably, around successive curves, finding other scenes set, as if just for our passage. At last the Stikine itself confronts us. It's about the same size as the Spatsizi but *blue* and breezy up here, young and emotional, jiggled and studded and glittering. It's even swifter and more self-assured than the Spatsizi is, as exhilarating as a running sea, and, augmented, adds twenty more yards of width. The blue water brightens the sunshine. There are a hundred swallows flying and kingfishers and other birds, even seagulls, mountains on one side and spacious forest everywhere else. The river goes along in major key. This is almost its beginning. There is no canyon yet. Life is easy for it. It's the young champion conquering day by day.

Ace was grazing close to the junction in a veldlike field of scrub that rose above our heads. A man's footprints would not have shown more starkly than his hooves did in the water-

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side clay. And having ventured where hardly a horse had been before, and seeing us still able to trace him, he knew that he needn't try to run. He went on nibbling flower heads, watching to be sure we were who we presumed to be. He trotted to the proffered oats, foolish and friendly—only allowing for his pride. And the bargain was kept. Morgan after haltering him rubbed him affectionately and let him eat. The sky, the vistas in every direction, spread out so expansively that I found myself looking around for other people to appear—if not contemporaries, then perhaps the first handful who crossed the land bridge in a few tiny bands and sifted south to become Kickapoos and Incas. With such a fine river bannering by, it was natural to think of them coming here.

Having caught Ace, we had the dangerous enterprise of swimming him back across the Spatsizi: dangerous for him. He was behind the boat at the end of a rope, his nostrils barely above the water, flaring, though he had entered like a good trouper. When he climbed out he was polished as red as a ruby, panting and dripping. Jim Abou rode him home. The rest of us had some panicky moments because of fuel line trouble, when we were suddenly adrift in the violent river. And there was a clapping thunderstorm. The whole world turned white. But Morgan reacted with competence, his face like a boy of eighteen, or like boyhood retrenched.

* * *

The horses were shod today and Mrs. Walker apportioned supplies for the hunting caches. Her husband was patching spark holes in the tents and repairing the generator which powers his radio.

The clump of cabins and tents is set in front of a grassy, flattened-off mountain where the caribou gather for love play in the fall, hundreds of them in sight at a time. Across the lake a series of rhythmic high ridges and draws leads into a complex massif called Nation Peak, where the clouds stir about. Everything is immediate and close, timberline being only 500 feet up. Through the spotting scope we've been watching nine goats browse on a steep slope. Above them are

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several specks in the snow which are probably goats lying down where the flies will leave them alone. The basins where Walker and Alec Jack explored fifteen years ago lie back behind. They'd climb and stumble upon 38, 33, 41 Stone sheep rams convocating together in a hammock-shaped cirque and get that quizzical innocents' stare which is only seen once.

I walked up the caribou mountain through an old burn, with the willows and aspen head-high and lupine and yarrow and fireweed growing. A few spruce were left alive on knolls and in hollows which the fire skipped by. From the lake, the line of mountains across the way looked like a row of elephants' backsides, but when I got higher they mounted and took more imposing forms, less rounded and climbing more, linking the valleys hanging between them with the valley under the principal peak. The valley of Cold Fish Lake itself is headless, emptying at one end into the Spatsizi and at the other end into another tributary of the Stikine. The winter trail from Caribou Hide, which the Indians ran with dogsleds, went along the bottom of it on the ice, while the summer trail was up on the high plateau I was climbing toward, where the walking wasn't obstructed by brush.

It was hot. The game was napping. I went down in the forest again, picking out numerous tracks of moose. A moose's two toes are straighter than a caribou's, like two half moons joined. A caribou's foot, in order to aid him in snow, bows out like two quarter moons. In a couple of other places I found bear tracks in the mud, smudged over, and also a short series of wolf tracks, which are bigger than a coyote's and longer in the foot than a cougar's or lynx's. An enormous added dimension is given a country by its game—to watch for a file of caribou weaving on the skyline (six were seen this morning) and to tremble for grizzly. No combination of stunning scenery can make up for its loss.

I sunned for a while on a bluff. A perfect reflection of the opposite mountains was combed into the lake. The moss was so deep that my elbows and knees sank in it a foot. Though most of the trees were white spruce, they looked like the gamut of evergreens because the raw soil withers them up

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before they grow very large. The roots grope out of the ground; the needles change. I watched a blue grouse peck about. A caribou swam across the lake, buoyant and tireless all the way. She was a pretty, bleached tan with two-pronged antlers in velvet, and she splashed in the shallows like a filly, muzzling the bugs off her rear. The animals all get exhilarated, sleeping, waking irregularly, when the days are as lush and long as this. They have more noddling about to do than they can find time for. It must be particularly joyful for a flustery creature like a caribou. Vulnerable animals that they are, they're soon to die. When I lived in Hazelton the last ones there were being killed. The previous winter some Tsimshians out for a weekend had discovered a remnant band of sixteen yarded in in deep snow and killed them all. Caribou give up the ghost very quickly, as if suddenly coming unstrung. Whether shot or speared, they spill out their blood lavishly, unlike goats and sheep, who bleed and die with great reluctance. When I lived on the Clearwater River, which is further south, they were already remembered as a sort of a vanished prize. Because of the tall flair of their carriage and their superb, airy antlers, they'd been the biggest game. Their herds had defined the wilderness, moving along eating the drooping black lichen on the low limbs of the trees. As a matter of fact, one settler told me that he had chosen the valley for its caribou. He was hiking through looking for ground to homestead when he climbed a side ridge and caught sight of a band of twenty-two in the meadows on top. Like most such people, he was no youngster then, but, watching, he felt as though he had never been so happy or certain about a decision before. And now he was surrounded by strawberry fields and cream-giving cows. He lived in a cabin floored with halved logs that the whole valley held dances on and he had a housekeeper caring for him, so the loss of the caribou was small next to that. Because of the logging, even the lichens were gone. He was smiling, not tolling a bell, but remembering the talk—how silly and giddy caribou are, how simple to kill, how they mill and fool and join the pack mules, how they won't run away if you raise your arm until they know

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why you are raising your arm. I've been hearing the same. It might be a bunch of buffalo hunters talking about their staple game, or it's like the malicious gossip about the Indians at Eddontenajon. When it stops the herds will be gone and the Indian settlement will have become a museum piece.

A ring appeared around the sun, meaning rain. When the ring is around the moon, they say you can tell how many days the rain will hold off by counting the stars inside the ring. About ten, as the sun set, the lake turned to mercury. The mountains acquired stately proportions. The Walkers were working at building their umpteenth cabin, nailing purlins to the rafters. They intend it to be a "hideout," off by itself on a pretty cove, as opposed to the main camp on the lake and the overnight cabin at the opposite end or the camps that they keep at Hyland Post and Eddontenajon. Goodness knows how many more they built at Bella Coola before they even arrived in the north. And yet as they kibbitz each other they might be putting a wing on a house in Bryn Mawr. It's not the people who are so different here, it's the events, the mode of living, a most ancient mode going back to when the Greeks landed in Sicily or the Danes settled in Iceland.

* * *

I went for a walk in the morning along the creek which ascends behind Hyland Post. The path is a modest game path between tumbled windfalls, both on the ground and overhead in the form of crossed swords that you duck through. The moss everywhere is a triple-mattress bed sprinkled with cones and ground pine. Higher up, I came to some breaks in the forest with dry forageable grass and also a soaking fern bog full of black and red birds and fed by a spring, the ferns growing over my head. The mountain face was a blunt backdrop. The mosquitoes and biting flies settled on me to stay, being accustomed to animals that can't slap, but they were too numerous to slap anyway. White tufts of caribou hair had snagged on the trees. There were lots of hoof marks cut in the moss and piles of droppings left from the months when

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the caribou wintered at close quarters here, accompanied by wolf-family droppings. I was forever peering up at meadows and shoulders I hadn't the energy to reach. The caribou and wolves mostly range high in this midsummer period, but wherever I crossed any mud I saw fresh moose and coyote tracks, or a dead log a bear had smashed open, looking for grubs. It always takes me a while in grizzly country to get over my fear of grizzlies, and this was the real Red Riding Hood forest, the trees topsy-turvy, fighting for sun, the ground rank and murky with primeval plants. The boulders and pines were affected with giantism; the ungainly terrain traveled in heaves; the creek caromed and plummeted too crudely to have carved a bed—it fell through a series of gashes. Each ascent snicked a snip off my heart and left me still looking up at a mountain wall with another meadow showing on top. The deadfalls that were caught on the living trees creaked in the breeze. A cloud that resembled swirling steam swallowed a clump of trees above me.

I saw a deer, of all scarce and unlikely things, bounding to keep me in sight as it fled. It looked like a jack rabbit in the super-sized landscape, compared with the animals I was expecting. But its feminine grace gave it importance. People here have a sheltering feeling for deer, they're so helpless after a snow, like conies before the wolves. They will shoot a moose for meat instead, although standards got rather general for the old-timers who were out in the bush alone. One of the contrasts I've noticed between the actual wilderness and the wilderness which writers incorporate into their books is the absence of sadism here. Sadistic images seem to abound in wilderness books. And yet all these people whom I've been meeting are quite free of that. With few exceptions, there's hardly a whiff as they talk.

Returning at noon, I had to cross a field of buckbrush which reached to my chest and head. It's so tough it's almost impenetrable and is sometimes called hardtack by ranchers because of its poor food value. The leaves turn a brilliant red in September and are cup-shaped, so that they hold a rainfall and drench anybody who walks through.

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I finally got to the Spatsizi, which was like home. It swings briskly by the three cabins, bending symmetrically out of view in either direction as soon as it can, as if to say, get your glimpse, this is all you will see. It's already a fuliginous, rich yellow-brown, and from forty to sixty yards wide, like a not very miniaturized Stikine. The ducks use it for a flyway, hurtling below the treetops at tremendous speed. A Canada goose flew by, having come up from heaven knows where, Acapulco last spring? And in the midst of his rocketing he saw me from the corner of his eye. He stopped flying, he nearly collapsed in midair from surprise. He emitted a queer, flabbergasted awp, as if he were thinking *here*?

* * *

I wouldn't have wanted to be the death of a cow, but Marty was killing an infertile animal anyway that afternoon, so I watched. Since I'd just inaugurated the highway between the Skeena and the Stikine with its first injury and since I was revisiting a house where I'd known happier days, my mood was suitably sober. In fact I felt as if I were watching a quite random death, as if the rifle at the last moment might swing toward me. (I noticed from how the farm dog slunk that he did too, especially since these dogs all die by the rifle eventually.)

Judging by the situation in the pasture, the whole lot of them had been tipped off. Besides the cow at issue, the heifers as a group bounded into a poplar woods as soon as we entered, while the cows with nursing calves kept perfectly placid and quiet. Marty, with the heifer-like lope which farmers develop, followed the fugitives, his face beet-burned except underneath his large nose. I got into the truck again, in the premonitory silence. When he had driven the runaways back into the field, they bunched for self-protection. He walked round and round them with a pump-action, short 30-30 resembling a light BB gun. He scattered some hay and they separated hesitantly. The cow, as the others left her, fixed her eye on me and the truck over her shoulder, while he took aim. He shot her below the ear, in order "not to kill her too

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dead." She fell as though axed, without any bull ring delays, and he dashed and cut her throat quickly as she lay stunned with sudden professionalism—a small, exact, adept man, instead of gangling and lanky. With jerking, upward motions he sawed the hole until it gaped, as if he were crouching, tying a swift knot. Then he drove off the rest of the herd. They'd bolted at the shot but had turned and come back, lowering their heads to look lingeringly, whether from fellow-feeling or out of curiosity. The heifers bounded into the same woods, but the cows who had calves were calm and unresponsive. When he was shooing the others they didn't consider that his advice applied to them. "Yes you too. On you go," he said, friendly.

She lay in shock, sometimes conscious, sometimes anesthetized. Her legs pumped, and he squatted beside her throat, superintending the flow. If she stopped threshing he jabbed her feet with the knife or else got up and manually swung her legs, with a kind of comradely sympathy, like helping someone to finish a job, giving his attention to her hind legs as well. None of the cattle were anywhere in sight. Once they left us they left with finality. The relationship that exists with them is such a strange one. They live with us: we live off them. They were deciding not to know. The cow on the ground groaned and gasped, pawing from the horizontal position. And yet it wasn't so much an act of suffering as of dismay and regret—all was over, all was lost. Because she ignored Marty she seemed to me remarkably impersonal, but the pawing was redolent with woe and sharp frustration—all was dissolved. I still wasn't convinced that the deaths were ending now, that this wasn't the first of a chain today. And the dog skulked subduedly, swallowing, feeling exposed in the open field, full of his own mortality, although he was smiling too. He licked his chops rather guiltily, so as not to arouse or offend us. He was waiting to lick the grass where she had lain but he was also afraid of being shot. I was thinking that the event had become irreversible. We were stuck with it. If we should change our minds, however much we might try to save the cow, it was too late. She kept rallying, fighting for air

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through the hole in her throat, her face a contrast of red and white, but it had gone too far.

When she was dead, Marty severed her feet and head and hung her from the fork lift of the tractor by her ankle tendons. He began to loosen and strip off the skin, mainly by pushing down on it with his elbows. Opening the body, he sawed through the brisket, handling the organs familiarly, turning them over, examining the uterus to confirm that she had been barren, and let them slide down on the ground in their dull, various colors. He was gently respectful about this. He might have been going through an old person's last possessions. The sense was the same. A neighbor boy rode up, kicking his horse close to the pile of organs, and tried to make him smell them. He told Marty his sons had caught three big salmon, and he laughed because the cow's bowels had moved when she was shot and at the dismal-sounding exhalations from her dead lungs. Marty chased him away, saying he was insulting the horse.

Cutting carefully, he reminded me of the bush professionals working on a moose, with the skin spread out like a table. The tail was saved for soup. The liver and kidneys, as they were obtained, were placed on the skin, which was inside up. Globs of fat were put aside for suet for pies and cooking lard. The rib cage looked like a red accordion. Nothing of life or remembrance clung to it, though the flesh on the steaks continued to twitch. The impression was of a burden surrendered, an assignment completed—the stomach left for the crows to peck. Onerously, the body was sawed lengthwise and left to hang. The skin was dumped in a lump on the head. And that's where the cow remained, on the ground as a Hereford-colored wad of hide and a meek head upside down, reduced to the size of a newborn calf. I thought of the pulverizers that convert an automobile to a modest bandbox of scrap. But its character as a cow did remain. It was like a costume taken off, tossed aside, that contains more of the character in the play than the actor does as he disappears. The character lies there behind.

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Have resumed. Took a night bus to see the green dawn. It was a five-hour trip to Vanderhoof, past countless long lakes and steaming ponds and shaggy, continuous forests hooded in fog or else Easter yellow where the sun hit. Occasionally there were a couple of late-sleeping houses in a cleared spot with high-roofed hay barns and red horses wading hock-deep in the wheat grass, as if they'd made mischievous use of the night alone. Against the forest, both the barns and houses looked like toys, except that the barns were surprisingly large and the houses surprisingly small. Every farm had several of each, where some pioneer had labored and stewed, marking time until a town formed. The fresh joy of traveling caught me again, leaving the garter snakes and the down-to-earth voices, the swimming, the baseball, the traditional.

Fort St. James is an historic trading post which has been added to lately. People go to and fro on lazy errands, a melded, winking population of sneakered half-breeds and booted whites. Three Norse-looking buildings remain from the old set, which have squared timbers and a vertical log standing at each corner instead of a cross-hatch of ends. *Squared* log timbers—maybe I can't convey the effect, but it was like a cultural explosion after the round-log walls that I'd seen. The steep, sophisticated roofs are shingled decoratively, and the original chinking has lasted a century and a half, being a sort of a white cement instead of just moss and mud. One building posed wearily on stilts in the field as if it were herniated and as if it were ready at last to give up.

About 6, we got into a Grumman Goose (John Joseph and Herbert in back loose with the freight) and, taxiing belly-in-the-water like a speedboat, climbed with the thrust of the two engines. Hesse, the pilot, bulged his lips as though he were biting a tennis ball, reaching up, reaching down, for levers and switches. He had the stick in the crook of his arm and he wrestled it back as if he were fighting sailfish. Wearing fitted dark glasses and large earphones, he talked into the radio frequently. Though the flight was of no more intrinsic importance than the rest of the flights I've been on, immediately,

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because he is one of a handful of illustrious pros, it seemed very different. Nobody knows who's the best of them because they each fly their own territory, but there aren't many pleasures that beat watching somebody do what he's exceptional at: I guess it's a masculine pleasure, the pleasure in excellence. Not until the climb was finished did he turn over the land, which was a far-reaching expanse of evergreens with swirling patterns of lighter-colored, deciduous trees. The lakes shone like salt pans, cloud-spotted lakes of great size. The flat forest began to be varied by mounds that built into landforms gradually and then into mountains. At Takla Lake we banged down in a belly landing to refuel at an isolated Reserve, exiting through the nose hatch past the emergency raft and rations. The proprietor is a chuckling, Hylandish man who supports himself by trading furs, selling staples and airplane fuel, and keeping the biweekly post office. He has a trim home painted beige with Venetian blinds, plus seven other buildings on the property and a stylish houseboat, all also beige. The pier is spade-shaped, itself a production. A traveling boat was tied up with an outboard on it that could have shoved a liner to sea, and a horse at the edge of the lawn scratched his rear on a thicket of underbrush.

We were supposed to pick up two other Indians from the Babine band, who had wanted to come across country by the connecting lakes and portages instead of around by bus as we had. However, they hadn't shown up, and Herbert too wished to desert—his suitcase was held as hostage. A local leader arrived, a zestful man with a fisty, dark face and recessed, close-set eyes. His hair was cut in a circle from the crown of his head. Obviously admiring Hesse, who flies in his village's supplies and mail, he hated to argue with him, but when Hesse said they were stupid, undependable Indians, he observed agitatedly that Hesse had appeared a day earlier than planned. Hesse was mad. We boarded again. Bullying the stick against his chest, he zig-zagged into a masterful, fantastic take-off, changing direction while under way.

Now the mountains got serious about being mountains. They trended northwest in parallel ranges. The ceiling was

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high and on every side was an absolute primevalism for as far as we at 7000 feet could see. It can never have been emptier, since the handful of trappers are gone and even the Indians have been sucked south and centralized. We flew for an hour and a half. We went up the Driftwood River, a valley the shape of a shoebox, the forest so thick that the tributaries showed only as snaking, special upshoots of trees, until we came over a dumbbell-shaped lake. Next was Bear Lake, where Alec Jack and his relatives lived before they migrated to Caribou Hide. This was a narrow wild-looking lake with snow on the chilly shelves above it and shallow alpine lakes on the caribou-grazing benches higher still, just underneath us. The mountains around were like modern war. There wasn't one that couldn't be climbed and there wasn't one the climbing of which would count for anything. Chains of them extended on in awesome serration to the four skylines, not a hero among them, just a fierce mass of tire irons and short knives. At the outlet of the lake we followed the Bear River to the Sustut, a wider, lush valley juiced with fertility. We were flying at peak level in a grander, more orderly fashion than on my trip last week down the route of the Telegraph Trail. We were seeing everything, the snow smothering the rock and the rock bashing free of the snow. The peaks were a tumult of rock and snow—not beauty, but an unspeakable tumult, like electronic jamming. The beauty was at the lower elevations—the majestic rug of the forest and the brief, apple-green plateaus at 4000 to 5000 feet. The forest was so complete, lapping up the bordering walls of the valley and curving with the Sustut, that I would have moaned, looking down on it, if I'd had time to moan. Swaying and bucking as on a surfboard, we scraped over a further series of ridges and peaks. This was the highest flying we had done, we were way up with the snow, so that the cabin was cold. But the sunlight washed the whole sky a milky blue. Everywhere, into the haze a hundred miles off, a crescendo of up-pointing mountains shivered and shook. A cliff fell away beneath us as we crossed the lip. The lake down at the base of it was oil-green. We passed over a glacier—blue ice nestled into a

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saddle. There was no chance to watch for game. The plunging land was life enough. It was a whole earth of mountains, beyond counting or guessing at, colored stark white and rock-brown. To live is to see, and although I was sweating against my stomach, I was irradiated. These were some of the finest minutes of my life.

The Mosque repeated the Sustut: a forest goosed with verdancy and curving lithely. Crossing the Mosque, we joined the valley of the Skeena, which at this remote upper end is nevertheless troweled deep and wide. In succession, short creeks are off on either side, grassy and green, to the ponds at their heads. There are burns and green forest, burns and magnificent forest, everything washed in blue milk. Surging irregularly upward again, we squeezed over a new sequence of mountaintops onto the Duti River; then onto the Kluatantan; to the headwaters of the Spatsizi. The Skeena's source valley was just on the west, shaped like a cereal spoon, underneath Gunanoot Mountain, and the Nass's was a skip beyond that. Then promptly beside us on the right, on the east, lay the Stikine's, its peaks the gray of volcanic ash and its source a sopping, unprepossessing valley too high to have trees, containing three or four oxided, winding ponds. Even the mountains that muscle together around the head of the Finlay seemed close and plain, a little southeast, as if we were seeing all the world at once. We rode an updraft over still another few barriers and twisted down the Spatsizi from near its head, past precipitous, green-colored, saw-toothed peaks that appeared to mount higher and higher, and over a maze of small muddy sloughs. In a side valley was Cold Fish Lake, quite incredibly high, right at shoulder-level with the peaks. Forest spread everywhere now. The shorelines were gracefully indented, and we raced in low over most of the length of the lake, alighting at the last moment, as if we were going to shoot up on shore. Instead of a banging on the belly of the plane, this time there was a pretty whir-flutter of water and air like the sound a flock of ducks makes when it lands. The lake, in fact, was full of ducks. We landed and they took off. We unloaded the crates without many words. We ate. In the

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cabin I'm in a grizzly skin is pinned to the wall like a spread-eagled moth. I should probably note that I'm allergic to it.

* * *

I can't get over the evenings—the balmy air, the late, late daylight. Life catches a perfervid quality, although nothing happens. The sky and the lake are the color of mercury. The moon is a slice of copper plate. The trees blow whimsically. The moments seem intense and precious. One could stay up all night and never get sleepy.

I've been told everywhere to talk to Norman Fisher. He's the Willie Campbell in town, the iron man, but so low-key I'm having a difficult time with him, or maybe I'm running out of steam. He's a reflective, pipe-smoking gentleman with a markedly sweet-natured face, the toughness underneath, and a fit, prudent body, like an old athlete's. He ran the mail to Telegraph Creek for two winters, before the First War. As early as 1902 he'd been in the Klondike, but by then "there were so damn many men you couldn't get a job if you cried your eyes out." He came south and worked on Wright Creek, finally buying one of the partners out. He lived in the low, snug cabin he lives in now and boarded at the Royal Hotel, never marrying, though he frequently wintered in San Francisco, as in fact he does still. He fought in the War and returned to work on virtually all the gold creeks, one by one, retiring in 1949 to his present business. The sign on his door says *Fishing spoken here.*

He has a crowded desk, and he's got seagulls on the lawn waiting to be fed. On the map, he points out for me the arms of the lake where the mountains fall steepest into the water and the mirroring effect is the best. I can't afford his boating rates, but he's been touched by my persistence in coming to his door (he's hard to see). At breakfast this morning in the hotel he walked up to me and laid his hand on my shoulder, meaning to ask me out on the water free. He has such delicacy, he couldn't say the words, though. I didn't help him because I didn't like his customers for today, an Anchorage bunch who were roaring put-downs at the next table. As we listened,

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he probably agreed with me. He stood in silence; he never did issue the invitation.

This was some fifty-five years ago that he carried the goods on the Telegraph Trail, so his being the "expert" indicates how little anybody cared to see Telegraph Creek. It was a pastime for him during the months when the creeks froze over. The pay of $100 a month was the same as for laboring at a sluice. He says he can't tell me about any hardships because there weren't any: it was just his favorite among all the jobs that he ever had. "You left here and you weren't bothered by anybody until you came back." The operators in the cabins kept track of his progress over the wire. They'd have dogfeed ready when he stopped for the night and a hot meal cooked. He carried their rum. Sure, they were a bit funny in the head, but so was he. The isolation did nothing to them that the rum couldn't straighten out. One man was a composer, and Fisher packed him an organ over the snows on the sled. He reached Telegraph Creek in anywhere from three to nine days, depending on what he felt like doing, and would stay over at the Gold Commissioner's or else with the Hudson's Bay man. It was sociable all the way along the line, and the only difference between the two towns was that Atlin had more white people and Telegraph Creek had mostly Indians.

It was a 420-mile lark. When he felt sprightly, he started back, still usually managing to put in a couple of weeks of poker-playing at home before the next run. If he ever was caught between telegraph cabins at night he crawled into the pile the dogs made of themselves. He used six, one being a substitute running loose. He would set out the sleigh and harness and they'd dash right to it. He had no lead dog, they were all good, all enjoyed it as much as he did, and he'd break in a replacement without thinking about it, by sticking him in. The summits above Nakina and Sheslay were sometimes hard. Snowslides raised hell with the trail. He'd watch the fires of the Indian camps, cozy below him, as he struggled down. Otherwise, the Dudidontu Valley was the only bad spot, a low area where the cold snaps broke the covering on the river and caused it to flood. He had already won his

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spurs on the route to Carcross, which was much more dangerous than the Telegraph Trail because it went mostly across the ice. With plummeting temperatures and terrific winds, the ice broke into floes. Once when the weather was fifty below he needed to paddle across ten miles of open water in a canoe. Another time, he had packed the mail on the backs of the dogs and was taking them through the bush way around the lake, on account of the risky condition of the ice. They chased a pair of caribou, losing a mail sack, and at last, when he arrived at the outlet river with them, the raft was on the wrong side. He tied up the dogs, jumped in and swam across, and brought it back.

As the years wore on, he quit chasing a sled in the winter. He would catch the last boat out for the south instead, these autumn boat trips being the best sport of the year. They were drawn-out occasions, because the crew of the *Tarahne* also was through for the year. On the other side of the lake the passengers would wait for them to put the boat into mothballs before proceeding to Tagish Lake, where the crew of *that* boat had to do the same. What with the drinking parties and the waiting around, it was likely to be ten days before they reached Skagway. Atlin was quite a city in its own right. It boasted three women taxi drivers and seven hotels, its own Customs man, a tugboat just for hauling the saw logs, and caribou meat in the stores at 15 cents a pound. Now there isn't even a young fellow left to cut the winter's stovewood for these older folks who can't do it themselves. Some of them worry about how they're going to keep warm.

Fisher is ready to stop talking after every sentence, and yet he's really about the first person who has made me envy him for his time. His pleasures would have been mine. He's the kind of old man who listens smiling to everything, who has got the most to say and yet who's the least inclined to say it, not from vanity but because he's at peace with himself, because he's long-lived. In any case, he doesn't take me very seriously. He doesn't expect a book will actually come out of my investigations; he's responding from paternal feeling. I asked to see his picture album, and he took out a snapshot of

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a crowd of well-wishers and cronies seeing him off in front of the Royal Hotel. The loaded sled is wrapped tightly in canvas. The dogs have surrounded Fisher and are nosing him eagerly. He's sitting on the board sidewalk, a swashbuckling figure in his tie and boots and high-crowned black hat, with an alert, military mustache. He's the center attraction. Everybody is happy.

I asked a lady this evening if Norman Fisher wasn't the most glamorous fellow in town at one time. She's a riverman's widow, a big, blowzy, rococo windbag of a woman who has certainly kept an eye out, but she didn't think so. She didn't make fun of him but she said that he was too short and that he was a little aloof. Her thoughts didn't go back to him at all but to people whom I'll never meet. So who knows?

* * *

Was lifted today by my Fisheries friends to the slide on the Tahltan River where the salmon are blocked. The Tahltan is the main spawning tributary of the Stikine, which is naturally why the tribe gave it their name and settled nearby. Lately, most of the fish are being harvested by the Alaskan boats on the coast and therefore the Americans are footing part of the bill. The operation has been a fiasco so far. The first plan was to have the men on the ground scoop the fish into barrels of water that the helicopter simply lifted upriver. The fish were traumatized by this, however, and the water in the barrels became toxic to them. At present, the helicopter only ferries the men to work and takes the foreman on tours. His dilemma is that if he blows a passage with dynamite he will kill all the fish who are waiting and perhaps precipitate a worse slide.

The canyon is a rudimentary, steep V, the walls clay and silt. The river within it looks slender and white from the air, but the damaged area is like an artillery range, pitted with boulders, heaped with khaki-colored debris. Our arrival sent up legions of birds—eagles, crows, and gulls from the sea. Being left to my own devices, I explored gingerly, completely alone once the pilot dropped me. It's only a little neighbor-

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hood river but it moves with violent velocity. The *water* gets through, all right. It has blasted a zig-zag chute for itself with the force of a fire hose. Just to sit in the thunder and watch is awesome. There were so many fish waiting in the slower water below the chute that half an hour must have gone by before I was aware of them. I listened and looked at the gulls who had gotten the word and traveled so far. I thought the actual fish were thickets of driftwood that the river had smashed together and submerged. The fins stuck out like a welter of branches in the shallows. I was astonished instead at the carnage on shore, the bear-chewed or beak-bitten bodies scattered about everywhere. When I did see the living fish I gaped, because I saw many thousands. The Tahltan was jammed with them, flank to flank and atop one another, seldom moving, just holding whatever position they'd gained, though that took continual swimming. Hundreds of them were in water which scarcely covered their backs. Shark fins I thought of, except that there was a capitulation to it, a stockade stillness, as if they were prisoners of war waiting in huddled silence under the river's bombarding roar. The pity I felt was so strong that I did anything I could not to alarm the ones nearest me. They were in an eddy behind a boulder a few feet away, and I wouldn't have dreamed of touching one of them because each had fought to attain that eddy and at any confusion or weakening of resolve he lost his hold and was washed downstream. Like mountain climbers, the most active fish would wiggle twenty yards further on and gain a new cranny. It might require a number of tries, but they were the freshest fish, they were unscarred, and occasionally one would get into the chute itself, into some partially sheltered corner, five feet by five, in one of the zigs or zags. These dozen desperate niches were so packed, they were like boxfuls of crated fish set into the bullet-gray water. The fish who were able to battle upcurrent did so by shimmying and thrusting more than leaping, although they did leap now and again. This was the cruelest sight of all, because they were like paper airplanes thrown into the hydrant blast. The water shattered and obliterated the leap and then banged the limp, tender body down

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the same stretch of rapids that it had been fighting its way up for perhaps the past day and a half.

Most of the salmon were quite catatonic by now. They just held their own in whichever clump or eddy they'd reached, unless some pathetic impulse moved them again. They might try to better themselves, only to be dislodged and lose fifteen yards. And for me, walking back and forth on the bank with absolute freedom, it was eerie to watch a spectacle of death that was measured in feet and yards. I could lift a fly out of a spider's web but I couldn't assist these salmon, so it wasn't like being a god. The swimmer who drowns is surrounded by fish who scull at their ease, and I suppose there was something in it about spheres of existence and the difference between being on water and land. But I felt like a witness at a slow massacre. Thirty thousand fish, each as long as my arm, stymied and dying in the droning roar.

These were sockeyes. Their bodies have a carroty tint on top of the back at spawning time, often quite bright, and their heads turn a garish green. They wear a lurid, mascaraed look, a tragedian's look, as if they were dressed for an auto-da-fé. I could tell how long a fish had been waiting by the color he'd turned and also, especially, by the length of his nose. This was another delayed discovery. All of them were gashed from the battering on the rocks they had undergone, but some, I realized in horror, had practically no nose left, as though a fish monger had amputated it, as though he had thrown the poor fish on his chopping block and cut off the front end right by the eyes.

The Stikine is a very rugged river. Permanent canyons shut off its upper tributaries to the salmon entirely. The Spatsizi, the Pitman, the Klappan have none. Tahltan Lake happens to be ideal for spawning, but this year only two individuals out of the umpteen thousands who've tried have been seen by the fisheries' counters to have reached the lake. The natural history of it is that the salmon live in the ocean for four years or so before they return, by the grace of some unexplained recording device, to the fresh-water source where they were born. They lay their own eggs, languish genteelly, and die.

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Thus four generations are in the sea at a time and, when a rock slide occurs, three years can go by before the blockage *has* to be cleared. If the fourth generation is equally foiled when it tries to spawn, then the river ceases to be a salmon river because no other salmon are living with memories of how to swim there. Given that much time, the Tahltan itself, fire hose that it is, might manage to clear its bed of the debris of the slide, but in the meantime a lot of commercial fishermen will be going broke.

The seven-man ground crew, arriving on the opposite bluff, stood looking at me. I was reminded uneasily of what the Tahltans did to the early prospectors who trespassed during a salmon run (they stripped them and tossed them in). These fellows descended the bluff by means of a rope, put on rubber suits, took long-handled nets, and commenced to dip salmon out of the niches and crannies along the lower sides of the chute, sixty pounds at a clip. It was a fisherman's dream until about the thirty-ninth netload, and then, as somebody said, you would never want to fish again. They'd constructed a rock-walled pool next to the chute with an exit into the river above and, in assembly-line fashion, they dumped their catches in that, although it was such a onerous business one man was kept busy simply repairing the nets. They worked with care, hurrying the fish to the pool before they could smother, with the common benevolence we have nowadays for the race but not for the individual. Yesterday they moved something like 2300, so it looked very promising, except I'd already been told that there is a second rock slide upriver which the fish are not able to pass and there isn't the manpower to lift them over.

The eagles were really reveling in the air like bank robbers who had broken into the vault. All they could see below them was fish; the river smelled like a fish peddler's cart. The gulls sat next to the water, so fat by now they ate only the eyes. The river raged by like a forest fire, while the living fish in it, as silent as climbers, clung to the eddies for their very lives. The level had fallen, draining several of the pools on the edge. The fish lay in the sand in spoke patterns where

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they'd been trapped, with their eyes and their gills aghast, like victims stretched in a common grave. Walking downriver, I met grizzly tracks; also coyote and fox tracks and tracks of black bear, and more grizzly tracks: little bears, big bears, and cub bear tracks. Blood and roe were smeared over the rocks. A lynx had been licking at it. Immense fish heads stared up. But the salmon still in the Tahltan were much warier and less fatigued here. They were newcomers and they were alarmed when they blundered into the shallows, instead of resting in exhausted droves. It became like a regular salmon river, the fish dawdling along in a placid, if cautious, manner, keeping a decent distance from one another, though their fins filled the river and they were obviously unaccustomed to such constricted circumstances after their free-swimming years at sea. When one of them leaped, it was a splendid super-leap, a fat-bellied, classic leap, not overwhelmed. They looked startlingly large and maneuverable, as if they would not be easy to catch despite the glut and congestion and the squeezed gauntlet that they had to run. I matched my boot with a grizzly's paws and our hind feet turned out to be the same size. His forepaws were about as broad as my boot was long. His stool consisted of practically all berry seeds. Yesterday he was up in the meadows; this morning he was down biting salmon in half.

* * *

Crossing by ferry to Vancouver, I found myself in a metropolis, a business city, the skids really under me now. My head was full of anticipatory scenes, phone calls I'd try from the very airport. I had the address of E. C. Lamarque, my last explorer, and I bussed out from the hotel to see whether or not he interested me. I was elated because although I knew nowhere else in the city to go, there was nowhere else I wanted to go and apparently no one but me in the city even knew he existed; it was like being given the Keys. I was immediately very taken with him. I saw him for two afternoons, only short visits, and at night in between I looked out my window at the wide spread of lights to pick out the neigh-

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borhood where he lived. He's a year older than Mr. Swannell, living with a wife 92 who is dying. From time to time as we talked she would start sobbing and gibbering in the bedroom, like a bumblebee humming, and trying to come out. Old Lamarque stood up and went to her patiently: "Yes, hello. Hello there. Yes, hello. Yes, hello." With no one else in the household, he cooks for them both, though he isn't up to such an exacting schedule.

He's a slender, frail, alert man, still wearing the baggy wool pants of a woodsman, although misbelted, and with a firm swing to his hands as he walks. He has a large, individual nose, a floppy mustache, sloping, observant eyes, a grumbly stomach, and a good-humored mouth. Walking a few feet, he walks with the lilting aplomb of a grandfather entering a maternity ward behind his daughter-in-law and his son. He lives in a green, run-down clapboard home hidden away among overgrown shrubs in an otherwise brand-new suburb very conscious of price. The lawn is uncut. The house looks as if it must have been the first house built on the whole hill. You duck through a sleave of vines to get on the porch. Inside is a clutter of old wicker chairs and crowded daybeds and cushions and clocks and memorabilia—a caribou skin blocks off the front of the fireplace. Light cords run out from the chandelier to awkward lamps across the room. On the walls are a couple of dozen drawings which Lamarque did of passes and rapids and lakes and Hudson's Bay posts that only a pathbreaker would have reached. The walls which aren't decorated with these are peppered with snapshots—Lamarque in a mukluk in front of an Indian hut with thirteen kids; Lamarque with a wild-headed pioneer; Lamarque with a dog-team of brindled bears. By now I'd seen lots of old photographs, but the startling thing was that there was no contrast here—this was the same man, still thin, still humane, with that fluffy, sub-zero mustache.

He's an Englishman who already by 1897 had charge of a trading post in the Northwest Territories forty miles from another settlement. He worked until the First War as a factor for Hudson's Bay, moving to a post on the MacKenzie River,

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then to one on the Athabasca at Fort McKay, and finally to Hudson Hope on the upper Peace, where the only interpreter he could find was afflicted with a tubercular hip and limped about on a crutch on their trips. They traveled by sled or canoe, buying furs, and at night he would play his banjo for the people, dancing the Prairie Chicken Dance. The communities were "nondescript," as he calls them, of no more than ten families or so, and no other whites, but the tribes were expert boatmen, especially the Crees. A missionary only came through at Christmas and Easter, yet nevertheless the Indians kneeled down with their backs to the fire every evening and prayed.

Later he left the fur trade and became a surveyor. Compared with Swannell, his style was soft-nosed, as competent but much milder, and just as Swannell's reports to the Province were chockablock full of mathematics, Lamarque's were fleshed out with pen and ink sketches which he had done from his horse or while he ate lunch: views that a traveler would recognize, down a lake or of a skyline. In 1930, his apprenticeship over, he led a scout group to the headwaters of the Columbia, looking for possible routes for a road. The next summer he spent at the sources of the North Thompson River on the same sort of errand, and, another season, he went to Bella Coola, inspecting pack routes into the interior. Then, again in the north, he went to the confluence of the Liard and the Kechika to try to improve on the system of trails that reached Lower Post. His favorite trip—that larky brisk trip I've heard about from so many men, wherever it happened to take them—was in 1934. He was a cool fifty-five by that time and, along with an Indian named Jack Stone, he mapped the Finlay-Fox-Turnagain country, en route from the head of the Muskwa River to Dease Lake by a way which had not been previously explored. They constituted the advance party of the Bedaux expedition. This was a *bouffe* private expedition equipped with tractors, whose aim was to mow a path six feet wide through one of the wildest regions on earth. Bedaux, a millionaire adventurer, an efficiency expert by profession, and a naturalized American, was interested in

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the tractors because he'd invented them. He'd taken them through the Sahara and through the African jungles. He was also attempting to film a movie, so that it was a mad assemblage, complete with late-sleeping French ladies and maids, a Swiss ski instructor, and several Hollywood camera technicians. One pack horse carried nothing but novels, another nothing but ladies' shoes. The hundred-plus horses had to be shot, as they starved in the bush or their feet went lame, but the people came out of it pretty well. They complained that they got diarrhea from the tractor fumes, but when the tractors broke down Bedaux turned back. He wasn't as prudent a few years later. He killed himself while under indictment for treason, an alleged sympathizer with Vichy.

Swannell was right in the thick of that expedition, noting down humidity readings and triangulations and the look of the French and Indian girls, while Lamarque, out ahead on his own, was having a very different experience. He was scouting in earnest, behaving as though there was no buffoonery going on in the company behind him. Jack Stone and the other Sekani of the Finlay hadn't any knowledge of the territory which they had entered because on the rare occasions when one of them wished to cross to Dease Lake he went roundabout by Caribou Hide, and no white man had ever crossed directly either. However, they moved along as smoothly as two swimmers swimming, both professional woodsmen, and they didn't stint on their comforts at all. They brought a fly to sleep under and horses to ride and to carry the dunnage, the dried milk and fruits, rice, bacon, porridge and flour and butter and Lamarque's portfolios and instruments. Fort Ware was their last stopping point. Ware was a pleasant, decent little man but, except for Jack Stone himself, the thirty or forty Indians living nearby were not in good shape, being starve-or-feast types, make-hay-while-the-sun-shines.

Afterwards, for two ringing weeks they saw nobody. It was that airy, aerial moment in time when a man is in country which nobody has ever set eyes on before, feeling blithe and surrounded by the sublime, yet constantly moving, as

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though to stop would be to founder and fall like an aerialist and die. They discovered a passage between key watersheds, now called Lamarque Pass, and a creek that led down from it, Jackstone Creek. On the slopes of the pass they counted forty goats, and seventeen moose at a lake later on. Lamarque named the lake Hattah Lake because of its palindromic shape. This was misunderstood in Victoria where the spelling was changed to Hottah, it being assumed that he must have heard and adapted some Indian name. Succinct set pieces stood about everywhere. A grizzly and three cubs were digging groundhogs out of a patch of snow, encirled by a caribou herd who ignored them. The mama lay on her side, reaching into a hole like a cat feeling after a chipmunk. Lamarque calculated direction and pitch more by his eye than by the gadgets that he had with him, and distances just by his traveling time. He sketched and wrote notes as he rode, all of which were incorporated in the map that he drew during the winter, marking his line of travel. It's on a ten-foot sheet of paper. Along the borders fifty-one of the significant views that he saw are inked—brush ridges, voluptuous peaks and massifs, and sober fir forests, along with written advisories, such as "Great spring gushes from side of hill," "Mountains of bald, castellated outline," "Undulating treeless region," "Green-coloured hill," "High massive range with pinnacles," and "Gravel benches and fire-swept pasture." He's specially specific about pasturage.

A garrulous neighbor dropped in. He wanted to tell us about his trailer trip through Banff National Park. Poor Lamarque stirred his gentle old bones to be hostly. He was exhausted and shaking, though. He was listening with patience to each of us, catching what we had to say. I finally got rid of the neighbor and then decided I ought to get rid of myself as well. We had the ten-foot map unrolled on the floor—we were standing on it in stocking feet—and to my astonishment, as we rolled it up, he gave it to me. I didn't know what response to make except that I couldn't remember being any more pleased. He smiled. He knew that. He said he had no use for it now, nodding good-by politely.

* * *

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"I love thee. Love to thee. I love thee," I mumbled over and over, preparing to go to the airport, already trying to explain where I'd been to the people I would be seeing again soon. The trouble was that even in mind's eye I really had nobody to say I love thee to. And I was still disoriented in the relentless, metronome scurry around. Instead of being only one rhythm of many, it was the whole. People never *do* stop and I'd come from a world where the people were few. Birds and insects are as active as man but they don't take up room and they don't live as long. I was worn out just watching the tempo. It wasn't like coming home from one of the ancient cities of Europe or a month's isolation in one of the second-growth forests of Maine. This was a return to man himself from the previous existence, about to be sealed off and stoppered. I was alarmed by the crush. Of course the future takes care of itself. All we know is what is lost, not what will be invented. If people haven't the room we know, presumably they punch out a new kind of room. In the meantime we become more selective, as to season and latitude when we travel, as to friends when we don't. We can either enjoy the Halloween sixties or turn into hobbyists, down on our hands and knees, watching how the deer mice get along, and we brush past more and more hordes of people in our hurry to save ourselves time.

In the lounge of the air terminal the count-down announcements proceeded, between tinkle-bells. Then the big, big try of the jet, getting off the ground. The patterns of lights below were ethereal and the night was placid and calm. The plane coasted sleekly across the face of the continent. We had snacks at midnight and dawn. Sunrise on the Atlantic was one of those great space sights of the new century which we usually see only in *Life* and which seem to mean more than they do. Laid lushly as wool, the orange and yellow colors intensified and intensified, as gorgeous as organ music and spreading the width of the world.

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Notes on Contributors

Interview

Charles Thomas Samuels, who teaches English at Williams College, has published criticism in many periodicals including *The New Republic*, *The American Scholar*, and *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Journal

Edward Hoagland is the author of three novels: *Cat Man*, *The Circle Home*, and *The Peacock's Tail*. "*Notes from the Century Before*" are selections from a book of the same title which will be published in the spring by Random House.

Art

Emilio Theler, a Swiss painter, has had shows of painting and sculpture in France and Italy.

Fiction

Louis-Ferdinand Céline, is best known for *Journey to the End of the Night* and *Death on the Installment Plan*. "The Colleague" is an excerpt from *Castle to Castle*, a novel written during the last years of his life.

Joy Williams' story, "The Roomer," appeared in the 1966 O. Henry Prize Story Collection. She is at present working on a novel.

Trevor Winkfield is the editor of *Juillard*. He is also collecting and translating Erik Satie's poetry.

Austin Wright, an Associate Professor of English at the University of Cincinnati, is the author of *The American Short Story in the Twenties* (University of Chicago Press). "Camden" is an excerpt from *Camden's Eyes*, a novel that will soon be published by Paris Review Editions.

Tom Veitch's work has appeared in many little magazines including *C*, *Lines*, *Mother*, and *Angel Hair*, as well as in the anthology, *The Young American Writers*. *Literary Days* was published by C Press in 1964.

Poetry

Bill Berkson's collection of poems, *Saturday Night*, was published by Tibor de Nagy Editions. He received a Poet's Foundation Grant in 1968.

Richard Brautigan's published books include two prose works, *A Confederate General at Big Sur* and *Trout Fishing in America*, and two volumes of poems, *The Galilee Hitch-Hiker* and *All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace*.

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Jim Brodey is the author of *Identikit* published by Angel Hair Books, and *Fleeing Madly South*.

Michael Brownstein's collection of poems, *Behind the Wheel*, was published by C Press.

Jim Carroll is the author of a pamphlet of poems entitled *Organic Trains*. Selections from his diary have appeared in *The World* and *Adventures in Poetry*.

Tom Clark's collection of poems, *Stones*, will be published by Harper & Row in January 1969.

Edwin Denby has published two books of essays, *Looking at the Dance* and *Dancers, Buildings and People in the Streets*, and two books of poetry, *In Public, In Private* and *Mediterranean Cities*.

Dick Gallup's published works include *Hinges*, a book of poems (C Press, 1965) and *The Bingo*, a play (Mother Press, 1966.)

John Giorno had a collection of poems published by Mother Press.

Anselm Hollo teaches at the Writers Workshop of the University of Iowa.

Frank O'Hara's last collection of verse, *Love Poems*, appeared in 1965, the year before his death. The nine poems in this issue are published for the first time.

Ron Padgett's most recent publication is a translation of Apollinaire's *The Poet Assassinated* with illustrations by Jim Dine. He and David Shapiro are the editors of *Sparklers*, an anthology of New York poets to be published by Random House. Holt, Rinehart and Winston plans to bring out a book of his poems in 1969.

Chris Peterson is a student at Columbia University.

Anne Waldman directs the Poetry Project at St. Marks Church In-the-Bowery where she edits *The World*. She is co-editor of *Angel Hair* magazine and books.

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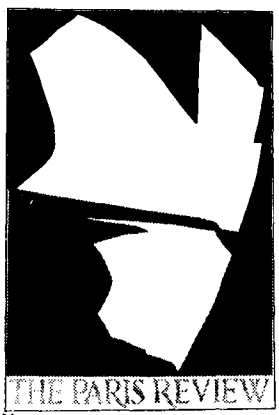

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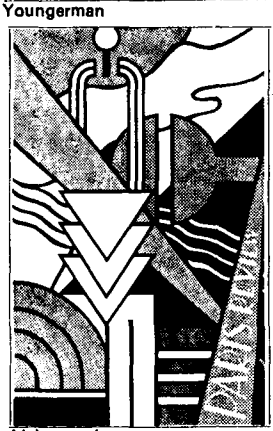

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